Transatlantic Slave Trade Notes

1. History of Slavery
   1. Slavery was a universal institution in the ancient world but it was a dominant labor force only in a small number of societies.
   2. First true slave society : Ancient Greece (6th to 4th Century)
2. How was slavery justified?
   1. Early civilizations - accident or bad luck.
      1. Weak? You’re a slave.
   2. Christian world – “Curse of Ham”
      1. biblical narrative that some Christians believed explained dark skin of Africans)
3. 18th Century European - pseudo-scientific racism.
   1. Scientists tried to prove Africans (and other non-whites) were physically/mentally less capable than whites
4. Why was Africa vulnerable to the Slave Trade?
   1. Ease of sailing Routes
   2. Availability of People (high birth rate)
   3. Civilizations and Skills (metalworking, farming, herding)
   4. No diplomatic repercussions (you weren’t enslaving other Europeans, so who cares!?)
5. Why Africa?
   1. Sailing Routes
   2. Unfamiliar with the Americas
   3. Availability of people
   4. Civilizations and skills
   5. Metal Working
   6. Farming
   7. Herding
   8. No diplomatic repercussions (African “governments” couldn’t fight back
6. Why did European powers eventually turn to African labor?
   1. New colonies/territories abroad to take care of! Epidemics reduced the native population by 50% - 90% in the Indies, needed more people to work.
   2. In English colonies the supply of servants decreased.
7. Geography of Slavery
   1. Enslaved Africans mostly came from the area stretching from the Senegal River in Africa to Angola on the west Coast.
8. Middle Passage: The horrible, awful middle leg of a three part voyage.
   1. Began and ended in Europe.
   2. Carried cargo of iron, cloth, brandy, firearms, gunpowder
   3. Landed on Africa’s Slave Coast and exchanged cargo for Africans
   4. Set sail for the Americas, where slaves were exchanged for sugar, tobacco, molasses.
   5. Finally, brought the ship back to Europe.
9. The Capture
   1. ~ 60 forts build along the west coast of Africa.
   2. Slaves were selected by the Europeans and branded.
   3. Walked in slave caravans (lines) to the forts some 1000 miles away.
   4. Only half survived the death march.
   5. Placed in underground dungeons until they were boarded on ships.
10. Middle Passage Statistics
    1. 10-16 million Africans forcibly transported across the Atlantic from 1500-1900.
    2. 2 million died during the Middle Passage (10-15%)
    3. Another 15-30% died during the march to the coast.
    4. For every 100 slaves that reached the New World, another 40 died in Africa or during the Middle Passage.
11. Conditions on Board the Ship
    1. Slaves chained together and crammed into spaces sometimes less than five feet high.
    2. Slavers packed three of four hundred Africans into the ship cargo holds.
    3. Little ventilation, human waste, horrific odors. Unclean.
    4. Tight packing - belly to back, chained in twos, wrist to ankle (660+), naked.
    5. Loose packing - shoulder to shoulder chained wrist to wrist or ankle to ankle.
    6. Men and woman separated (men placed towards bow, women toward stern).
    7. Fed once or twice a day and brought on deck for limited times.
    8. Journey lasted 6-8 weeks.
    9. Due to high mortality rate, cargo was insured (reimbursed for drowning accidents but not for deaths from disease of sickness)
    10. Common to dump your cargo for sickness or food shortages.
    11. Slave mutinies on board ships were common (1 out of every 10 voyages across the Atlantic experience a revolt).
    12. Covert resistance (attempted suicide, jumped overboard, refusal to eat).
12. Destination of Captives
    1. Caribbean 40%
    2. Brazil 40%
    3. Latin America 10%
    4. British North America 10%
13. Slave Exports and Profits
    1. Early 18th Century - 36,000 per year
    2. During 1780’s - 80,000 per year
    3. Between 1740-1810 - 60,000 captives/year on average.
    4. 17th Century - slave sold in the Americas for about $150
14. Slave *trade* made illegal in Britain in 1807, US 1808, France 1831, Spain 1834.
15. Once declared illegal prices went much higher. 1850s prime field hand $1200 - $1500 (about $18,00 in 1997 dollars).
16. Effects of the Transatlantic Slave Trade
    1. **10-16 million** African people were sold into slavery leaving a significant portion of African without its strongest men
    2. Families were torn apart
    3. European colonies thrived and were extremely wealthy while Africans were exploited and lost great wealth
17. Racism
    1. Probably the most lasting effect is **racism**.
    2. European nations tried to use science to prove that Africans were in some way “less than human”, or an inferior race to justify their harsh treatment and enslavement of Africans
    3. Even today some racism remains
    4. To combat the negative feelings of racism, African American leaders began a movement for all people with African ancestry to be joined together regardless of ethnic group, economic status, and cultural differences.
    5. This movement was called ***Pan Africanism*** and its purpose was to unify Africa.
    6. **Manufactured goods, rum and textiles** from England to Africa
    7. **Slaves** to Sugar Islands (Indies)
    8. **Sugar, tobacco, cotton** home to England
    9. Goods exchanged for slaves taken to West Indies. Profits used to purchase sugar (and other goods) for England.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Agriculture**  Rice  Sweet Potatoes  Herding  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Working Style (cooperative labor) | **Food**  Spices (red pepper, sesame, cajun)  Okra  ­  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Rice | **Dishes**  Gumbo  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Ash and hot cakes  Sweet potato pie |
| **Music**  Banjo  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Blues/Jazz  Call and response  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | **Religion**  Call and response patterns  Emotional services  Multiple spirits and souls  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | **Tales and Words**  Trickster takes (Anansi the Spider, Brer Rabbit, Bugs Bunny)  Words like bogus, bug, phony, yam, tote, gumbo, tater, jamboree, jazz.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ language |

