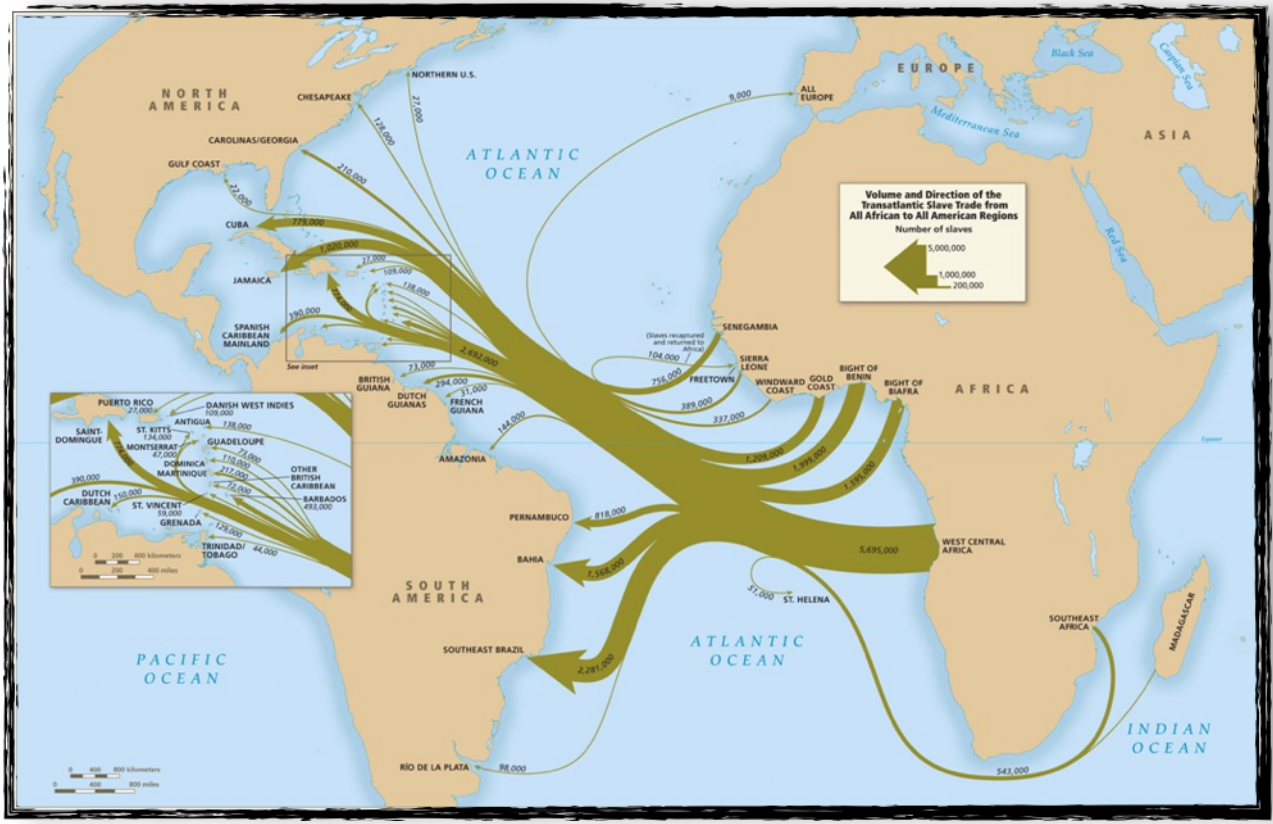


# The Transatlantic Slave Trade



1. What does this map show us about the transatlantic slave trade?

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2. Where in Africa were most enslaved people being taken from?

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3. Where in the Americas are most people taken to as slaves?

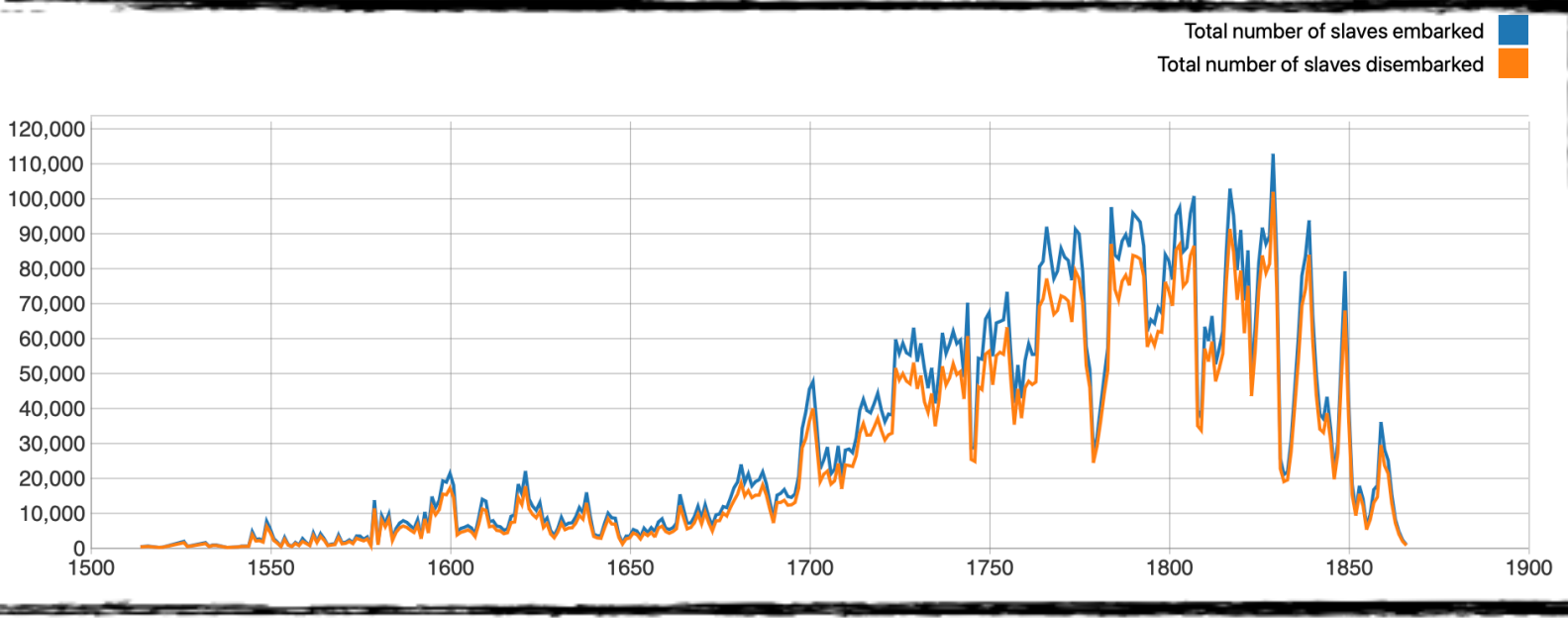
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4. How many people were brought to South America as slaves?

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5. How many people were brought to English Colonies in North America as slaves?

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1. What does the word *embarked* mean?

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2. Without looking it up, what can you infer *disembarked* might mean?

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3. Roughly, what are the number of slaves who embarked and disembarked in 1700?

Embarked: \_\_\_\_\_

Disembarked: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you think might account for the difference between total number of slaves embarked and total number of slaves disembarked?

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5. What do you think might be the cause for the large drop in embarked and disembarked slaves after 1850?

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## Enslavement in Africa

### Olaudah Equiano



Olaudah Equiano was an abolitionist and former slave from Igbo territory in what is now southeast Nigeria. He was born around 1745, and around the age of 11 he was sold to slave traders and forcibly taken to the Americas. He purchased his own freedom in 1766 and lived in England, where he wrote his autobiography: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*. The book describes in detail the forced journey he took from Africa to the Americas in what is known as “The Middle Passage.” (The map on the first page illustrates this slave voyage.) After the Revolutionary War in America, Equiano helped former slaves who were freed by the British settle in London.

The painting on the left is often used as a depiction of Equiano, although its accuracy is disputed. Some historians believe the painting may be of another former slave, Charles Ignatius Sancho. Why might it be difficult for historians to verify who is the subject of a painting?

“One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual, and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both; and, without giving us time to cry out, or make resistance, they stopped our mouths, tied our hands, and ran off with us into the nearest wood and continued to carry us as far as they could till night came on...”

“The next day proved a day of greater sorrow than I had yet experienced; for my sister and I were then separated, while we lay clasped in each other’s arms. It was in vain that we besought them not to part us: she was torn from me, and immediately carried away, while I was left in a state of distraction not to be described. I cried and grieved continually; and for several days I did not eat anything but what they forced into my mouth.”

1. What is Equiano describing in this passage of his autobiography?

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2. What do you think Equiano means when he says “they stopped our mouths”?

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3. What does the word “besought” mean?

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4. In what ways do we specifically see Equiano’s freedom and liberty taken from him?

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# On The Ship

## (The Middle Passage)

“One day...two of my wearied countrymen, who were chained together...preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea: immediately another quite dejected fellow...also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship’s crew...Two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully, for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery.”

-Olaudah Equiano

### Vocabulary Check!

Define *dejected*:

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Define *wretches*:

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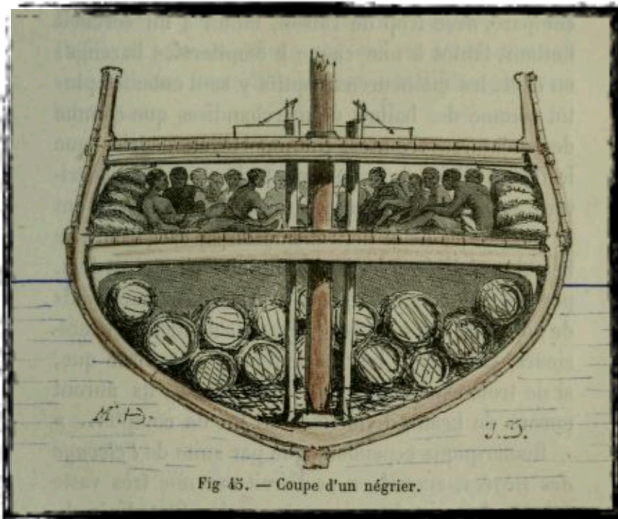


Fig 43. — Coupe d'un négrier.

Cross section of a slave ship  
Drawing by Leon Renard, in *L'art Naval* (1881)

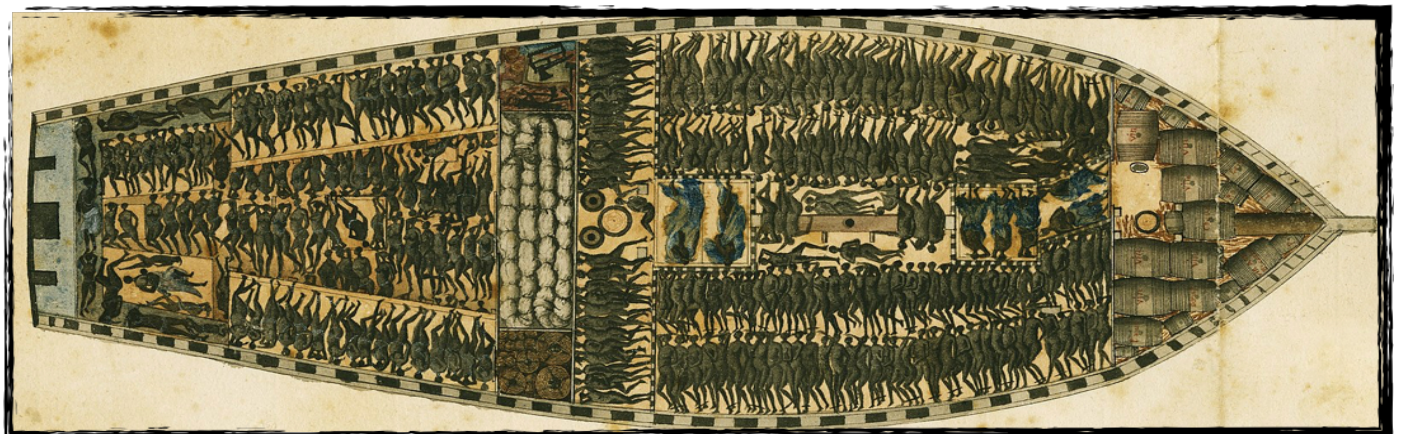
With crowding came lack of sanitation, and the enslaved Africans found that none of the familiar habits of personal hygiene could be observed. Thus, illness was nearly impossible to avoid in that setting. Exhausting, malnutrition, fear, and seasickness resulted in depressed immune systems and increased vulnerability to disease.

-Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery* (2007)

### Vocabulary Check!

Define *malnutrition*:

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Painting of the Slave Deck of the *Marie Séraphique* (1770)

1. Think back to the graph of embarkations and disembarkations. How does Equiano's passage explain the difference between the numbers of people embarking and disembarking on slave ships?

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2. What is Smallwood's passage describing?

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3. How does the image of the Marie Séraphique relate to Equiano's and Smallwood's passages?

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4. What do the two images show us that the words of Equiano and Smallwood do not? What is being depicted in these images?

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5. Which of these are primary sources? Secondary sources? Explain your choice.

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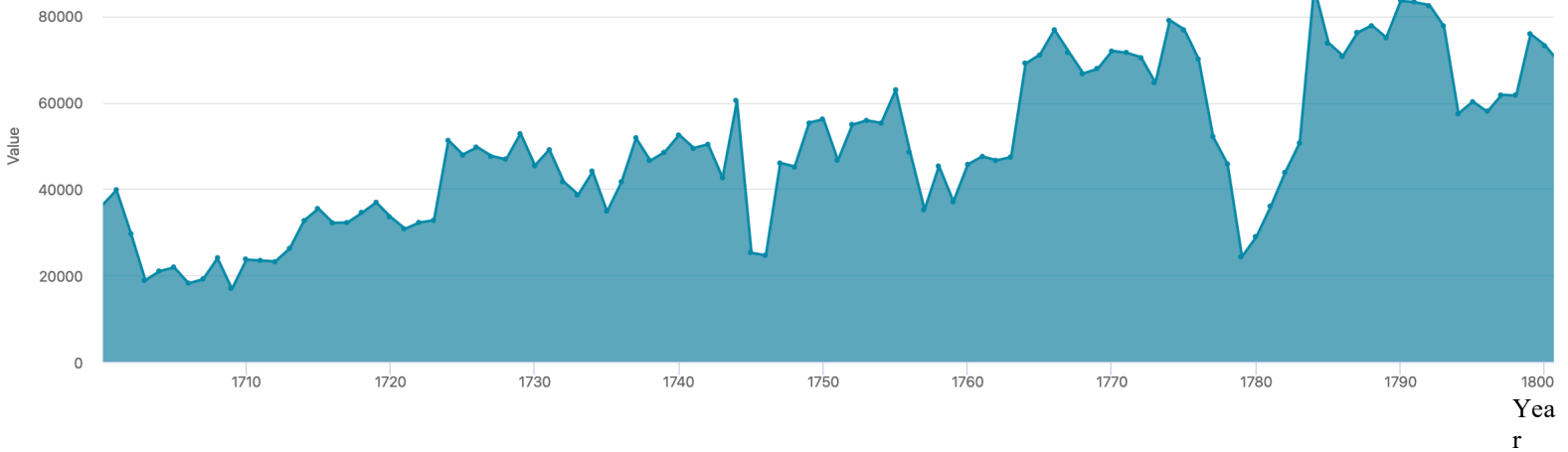
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# Graph of Disembarked Africans to the Americas

Total Number of Disembarked Africans



1. In what years were the total amount of disembarked Africans greater than 60,000?

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2. In what years were the total number of disembarked Africans less than approximately 30,000?

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3. What is the approximate difference between the number of disembarked Africans in 1775 and 1780?

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4. What is the approximate difference between the number of disembarked Africans in 1780 and 1785?

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5. What might account for the large discrepancy in embarked Africans around 1780?

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Discrepancy: noun- a difference between things that are expected to be the same.

# Slavery and Liberty in America

Under the law of nature, all men are born free, every one comes into the world with a right to his own person, which includes the liberty of moving and using it at his own will. This is what is called personal liberty, and is given him by the author of nature...

-Thomas Jefferson

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

-The Declaration of Independence  
(Written by Thomas Jefferson)

Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, *give me liberty or give me death!*

-Patrick Henry

It is much to be wished that slavery may be abolished. The honor of the States, as well as justice and humanity, in my opinion, loudly call upon them to emancipate these unhappy people. To contend for our own liberty, and to deny that blessing to others, involves an inconsistency not to be excused.

- John Jay

We have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other.

-Thomas Jefferson

There is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it [Slavery].

-George Washington

These men are usually called "The Founding Fathers" of America. Many of them were slave owners, despite talking about freedom, liberty, and equality. Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, owned over 600 slaves throughout his life. George Washington, the first president of the United States, owned over 100 slaves at his home Mount Vernon. However, in his will he wrote that after his death his slaves should be freed. This tension between slavery and the liberty led one English opponent of the American Revolution, Samuel Johnson, to criticize the founding fathers by saying:

*"How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?"*

On a blank piece of paper, choose four quotes and rephrase them in your own words. After you are done with that, write down your thoughts about the Founding Fathers and their views on slavery. Do their actions match their words? Do you think they were being fair? Why do you think they said all men are created equal, while also owning slaves? Does Samuel Johnson make a good point?

When you are done, answer the questions on the next page.



1. Thomas Jefferson's quote about holding the wolf by the ear is a metaphor. What do you think his statement might mean?

Metaphor: noun - a figure of speech that is used to make a comparison between two things that aren't alike but do have something in common.

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2. The authors of these passages speak about liberty and freedom. Do any of them seem to be against slavery? Why do you think so?

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3. Think back to Equiano and Smallwood's description of life on the slave ship. How can you connect Patrick Henry's phrase "Give me liberty or give me death!" to the experience of the Middle Passage?

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4. Look at the quote from the Declaration of Independence. Thinking back to Equiano's experience and the data of embarkations and disembarkations of slaves, is it true that all men are created equal? In that time period, did everyone have the right to life and liberty? Explain your answer.

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