The Price of Sugar

Trace how the slave trade changed societies across the Atlantic.

SS24.8.13 "Analyze the economic, political, and social effects of the transatlantic slave trade on African societies and American colonies. 13a Describe the conditions and treatment of enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage and in the Americas."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle one economic, one political, and one social effect for African societies and for the colonies. Underline two details about conditions or treatment during the Middle Passage or in the Americas.

From African Ports to Barbados

1. In the 1700s, ships from Europe reached ports along the West African coast to buy captive people. Some African rulers and merchants sold prisoners of war and people seized in raids in exchange for goods, including guns and cloth. The trade brought wealth and weapons to some leaders, but it also encouraged more raids and conflicts. Communities that lost people lost farmers, craftworkers, and family members. Those losses weakened local economies and broke family ties. African societies did not all respond alike: some leaders took part, while others opposed the trade.

2. After capture, enslaved Africans were forced onto ships for the Middle Passage, the ocean crossing to the Americas. People were held in crowded spaces below deck, often with little fresh air, food, or clean water. Illness spread, and many died before reaching land. Ship crews used violence and restraints to control captives, treating people as property rather than as human beings. Some captives resisted, including by refusing food or trying to escape. The crossing separated people from their homes and made it harder for families to stay together.

3. In colonies such as Barbados, enslaved Africans were sold and forced to grow sugarcane for export. Plantation owners made money from sugar sold across the Atlantic, and colonial trade expanded. Laws protected owners' power and denied enslaved people freedom, making slavery a central part of colonial society and politics. Enslaved people faced harsh labor, punishment, and the threat of family separation. They also built communities, kept cultural traditions, and resisted their enslavement in many ways. The profits depended on unpaid labor and the denial of people's rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could the trade increase some African leaders' power while weakening other communities?

2. How did conditions during the Middle Passage add to the losses African communities faced?

3. How did forced sugarcane labor affect both the economy and political power in Barbados?

4. How did the trade disrupt family life in both African communities and the colonies?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum is labeling a sack of sugar from colonial Barbados. Write a five-sentence label connecting the sugar to effects on African societies, conditions during the Middle Passage, and effects in the colony. Explain why these events belong in the same story.

ANSWER KEY

The Price of Sugar

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.13

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle one economic, one political, and one social effect for African societies and for the colonies. Underline two details about conditions or treatment during the Middle Passage or in the Americas. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could the trade increase some African leaders' power while weakening other communities?	**Some leaders gained wealth and weapons, while communities that lost people had fewer workers and faced more raids and conflicts.**
2	How did conditions during the Middle Passage add to the losses African communities faced?	**Crowding and illness caused deaths, and the crossing separated people from their homes and families.**
3	How did forced sugarcane labor affect both the economy and political power in Barbados?	**Sugar exports brought profits and expanded trade, while laws protected owners' power and denied enslaved people freedom.**
4	How did the trade disrupt family life in both African communities and the colonies?	**African communities lost family members to capture and sale. In the colonies, enslaved people lived with the threat of family separation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This sack of sugar represents more than a crop grown in Barbados. The sale of captive people at African ports brought weapons to some leaders but left other communities without workers and family members. During the Middle Passage, captives endured crowded holds, illness, and violence. In Barbados, enslaved Africans were forced to grow sugarcane, bringing profits to plantation owners while laws denied workers freedom. The sugar's value to owners depended on a trade that damaged African communities and denied enslaved people their rights.

Accept other effects supported by the passage when students explain the connection. For the museum label, look for a clear link across Africa, the Middle Passage, and Barbados, including treatment of enslaved people.