Across Forced Waters

Conditions and treatment during the Middle Passage and in the Americas

SS24.8.13a "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 Underline two conditions aboard the ships, circle two actions by ship crews, and number three conditions or forms of treatment in the Americas. Use your marks to compare the two stages.

The Voyage and What Followed

1. The Middle Passage was the forced voyage across the Atlantic that carried kidnapped Africans to the Americas as part of the transatlantic slave trade. On many ships, traders crowded people below deck and held them in chains. Airflow was poor, and the space was hot and filthy. People often had too little clean water and food. Seasickness and the movement of the ship made cramped quarters even harder to endure. These conditions spread disease, and many people died before reaching land. Those who survived arrived far from their homes and families.

2. Ship crews treated the captives as property rather than as people with rights. Armed guards watched them, and crews used threats and violence to prevent escape or resistance. Some captives resisted by refusing food, and crews sometimes forced them to eat because traders wanted to sell them. People also found ways to help one another, sharing words, songs, or small acts of care when possible. Surviving records do not tell every person's story, but they show that the voyage was not simply difficult travel. It was a system of confinement and coercion.

3. In the Americas, buyers sold many survivors at ports or markets, often separating relatives. Enslaved Africans were forced to work on plantations growing sugar or tobacco, in mines, or in homes. Long hours, dangerous tasks, and inadequate food or shelter harmed their health. Enslavers used laws, guards, and physical punishment to control labor and restrict movement. Conditions varied by place and job, but people were denied freedom and the ability to control their lives. Despite these limits, they maintained family ties and cultural practices and resisted enslavement in many ways.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Describe two conditions aboard the ships and explain how those conditions affected captives.

2. How did ship crews treat captives who might resist? Give two actions from the passage.

3. Describe the work and living conditions that many enslaved Africans faced in the Americas.

4. Compare how enslavers controlled people during the voyage and in the Americas.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 65 to 85 word museum label about the Middle Passage and enslavement in the Americas. Describe at least two conditions or forms of treatment during the voyage and two in the Americas, then explain how enslavers used force at both stages.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two conditions aboard the ships, circle two actions by ship crews, and number three conditions or forms of treatment in the Americas. Use your marks to compare the two stages. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Describe two conditions aboard the ships and explain how those conditions affected captives.	**Crowded, poorly ventilated spaces and too little clean water helped disease spread. Many captives died before reaching land.**
2	How did ship crews treat captives who might resist? Give two actions from the passage.	**Armed guards watched captives, and crews used threats and violence to prevent escape or resistance. Crews sometimes forced people who refused food to eat.**
3	Describe the work and living conditions that many enslaved Africans faced in the Americas.	**They were forced to work on plantations, in mines, or in homes. Long hours, dangerous tasks, and inadequate food or shelter harmed their health.**
4	Compare how enslavers controlled people during the voyage and in the Americas.	**During the voyage, crews used guards, threats, and violence. In the Americas, enslavers used laws, guards, and physical punishment to control labor and restrict movement.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

During the Middle Passage, enslaved Africans faced crowded, poorly ventilated spaces below deck and too little clean water. Armed crews used threats and violence to prevent escape. After arrival in the Americas, buyers sometimes separated relatives, and enslavers forced people to work long hours on plantations or in mines. Laws and physical punishment restricted their choices. Across both stages, enslavers used force to control others for profit, while enslaved Africans found ways to care for one another and resist.

Accept other accurate details from the passage. In the museum label, look for at least two details about each stage and an explanation of how force was used in both.