

Coasts to Captivity

Tracing how European trade became an Atlantic slave-trading system.

SS.68.AA.1.2 "Describe the contact of European explorers with systematic slave trading in Africa."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three actions taken by European sailors or merchants, circle two details that show how the trade became organized, and number two effects on people or communities.

European Contact and an Expanding Trade

- ① Before European ships reached West African coasts, slavery existed in several African societies and in trade across the Sahara and Indian Ocean. Enslaved people could be captured in wars, punished for crimes, or forced to repay debts. Their experiences differed by place. By the 1440s, Portuguese sailors were exploring West Africa. They raided coastal communities, taking captives to Portugal in 1441–1444. Later, trade in goods and captive people linked European merchants to existing African trading networks.
- ② As sugar, tobacco, and later rice plantations expanded in the Americas, European investors wanted large numbers of workers. European merchants and shipowners financed voyages that carried manufactured goods to African ports. There, they purchased captive people from African merchants and rulers, who had obtained captives through warfare, raids, kidnapping, and other coercion. European companies built coastal forts and trading posts in some areas. Regular routes, credit, records, and armed ships made the trade more organized and profitable for European merchants.
- ③ Captive people were forced aboard European ships for the Middle Passage across the Atlantic. Conditions were crowded and violent, and many people died during the crossing. In the Americas, survivors were sold and compelled to labor on plantations and in other workplaces. The trade brought wealth to many European merchants and plantation owners. It also caused lasting harm: African communities lost people, faced instability, and endured repeated violence. European contact did not create slavery in Africa, but it helped turn regional trafficking into a vast Atlantic system.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What did Portuguese sailors link European merchants to when they traded at West African coastal ports?

2 What development in the Americas increased European demand for captive workers?

3 Name two details that show the slave trade became a regular, organized system.

4 How did European contact change the scale of slave trading, and name one harm it caused in Africa?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write four sentences explaining how European contact with African coastal trade became part of a systematic Atlantic slave-trading system. Include one condition before contact, two European actions, and one result.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three actions taken by European sailors or merchants, circle two details that show how the trade became organized, and number two effects on people or communities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did Portuguese sailors link European merchants to when they traded at West African coastal ports?	They linked European merchants to existing African trading networks.
2	What development in the Americas increased European demand for captive workers?	The expansion of sugar, tobacco, and later rice plantations increased the demand for workers.
3	Name two details that show the slave trade became a regular, organized system.	Accept any two: regular routes, credit, records, armed ships, coastal forts, trading posts, or financed voyages.
4	How did European contact change the scale of slave trading, and name one harm it caused in Africa?	It helped turn regional trafficking into a vast Atlantic system. Harms included communities losing people, instability, and repeated violence.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before Portuguese voyages, African societies already had forms of slavery and trading networks. Portuguese sailors raided coastal communities; later European merchants purchased captives and financed repeated voyages. Their demand for labor on American plantations connected African ports to crossings of the Atlantic. Because routes, financing, forts, and records supported regular sales, this contact became part of a large, organized slave-trading system.

Accept equivalent evidence-based answers drawn from the passage. Students should distinguish between slavery that existed before European arrival and the expanded, organized Atlantic system supported by European trade and demand.