**Triangular Trade Classwork Reading**

**The Causes of African Slavery**

Beginning around 1400, European colonists saw the possibility of large-scale plantation farming in the Americas. The products of these plantations, which included sugar, tobacco, rice, and cotton, could be sold for a great profit in Europe. To grow the products, the colonists needed cheap labor. They began using enslaved Africans on plantations and farms.

**Slavery in Africa**

Slavery had existed in Africa for centuries. In most regions, it was a relatively minor institution. Often during war, African societies made slaves out of their defeated enemies. In most African societies however, slaves had some legal rights and had opportunity for social mobility (moving up in society). They did no more work than other members of society. Slaves could also escape their bondage in numerous ways, including marrying into the family they served. When Europeans began enslaving Africans, they did so in a new way. This form of slavery became known as **chattel slavery**. In chattel slavery, slaves were not treated as humans, but as a form of property. Chattel slavery played upon European greed and racism, and was vastly different from the slavery practiced in Africa.

**The Demand for Africans**

Colonists saw advantages in using Africans in the Americas. First, many Africans had been exposed to European diseases and had built up some immunity. Second, many Africans had experience in farming and could be taught plantation work. Third, Africans were less likely to escape because they did not know their way around the new land. Fourth, their skin color made it easier to catch them if they escaped and tried to live among others.

**African Cooperation and Resistance**

Many African rulers and merchants played a willing role in the Atlantic slave trade. Most European traders, rather than travel inland, waited in ports along the coasts of Africa. African merchants, with the help of local rulers, captured Africans to be enslaved. They then delivered them to the Europeans in exchange for gold, guns, and other goods. As the slave trade grew, some African rulers voiced their opposition to the practice. Nonetheless, the slave trade steadily grew. Lured by its profits, many African rulers continued to participate. African merchants developed new trade routes to avoid rulers who refused to cooperate.



**STOP—ANSWER QUESTIONS 1-4**



**The Triangular Trade**

In time, the buying and selling of Africans for work in the Americas—known as the Atlantic slave trade—became a massive enterprise. Between 1500 and 1600, nearly 300,000 Africans were transported to the Americas. During the next century, that number climbed to almost 1.3 million. By the time the Atlantic slave trade ended around 1870, Europeans had imported about 9.5 million Africans to the Americas.

Africans transported to the Americas were part of a transatlantic trading network known as the **triangular trade**. Over one trade route, Europeans transported manufactured goods to the west coast of Africa. There, traders exchanged these goods for captured Africans. The Africans were then transported across the Atlantic and sold in the Americas. Merchants bought sugar, coffee, and tobacco in the Americas and sailed to Europe with these products.



**STOP—ANSWER QUESTION 5**

**Consequences of the Slave Trade**

The Atlantic slave trade had a profound impact on Africa, the Americas, and Europe. In Africa, enslaved Africans were traded as property or goods, just like the guns, sugar, tobacco, and other products that were traded. While Triangular Trade was beneficial to those doing the trade, it was not at all beneficial to the Africans who were enslaved and who had unwillingly become a part of the trade. Due to the enslavement of so many Africans, numerous cultures lost generations of their fittest members—their young and able—to European traders and plantation owners. In addition, countless African families were torn apart. Most of them were never reunited. The slave trade devastated African societies in another way: by introducing guns into the continent, this heightened the effects wars and conflict.

While they were unwilling participants in the growth of the colonies, African slaves contributed greatly to the economic and cultural development of the Americas. Their greatest contribution was their labor. Without their back-breaking work, colonies in the Americas may not have survived. In addition to their muscle, enslaved Africans brought their expertise, especially in agriculture. They also brought their culture. Their art, music, religion, and food continue to influence American societies. The influx of so many Africans to the Americas also has left its mark on the very population itself. The substantial African-American populations in the Americas trace back to the horrific slave trade.

Europe also saw many beneficial consequences of the triangular trade. Before the triangular trade, products like tobacco, sugar, cotton for cloth, rice, lumber for furniture and ships were far more expensive. The colonies and the system of slavery made products that were once only available to the richest in England, possible for middle and lower classes to afford. The geography and natural resources of the colonies in the Americas along with the inexpensive workforce of enslaved Africans significantly lowered costs of food and manufactured items in Europe.

**STOP—ANSWER QUESTION 6**