

# The Transatlantic Slave Trade

## Differentiated Reading Comprehension

The resources in this pack are designed to support teaching on or around the transatlantic slave trade and slavery or as part of UKS2 learning during Black History Month. This pack is specifically aimed at an UKS2 audience due to the distressing nature of the content.

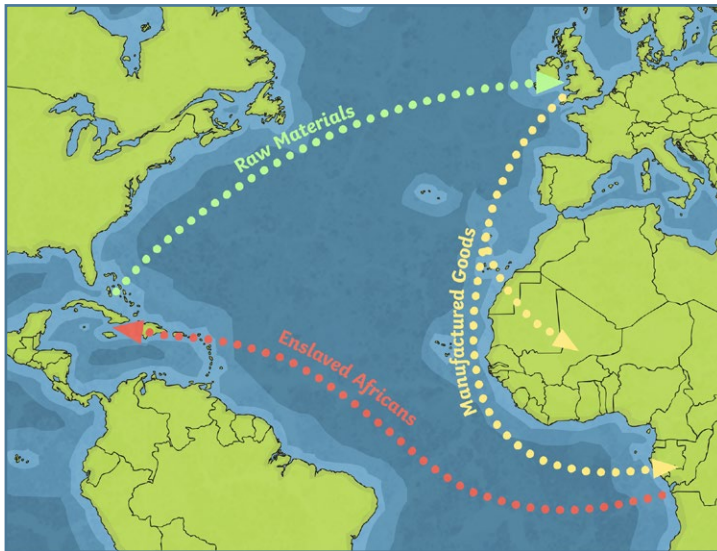
Please be aware that it will not be appropriate for the children in your class to research further into the slave trade due to the harrowing information and images freely available on the Internet.

Know your class: some content may be too upsetting for some children.

# The Transatlantic Slave Trade

Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Europeans forcibly removed millions of people from their homes in West Africa and transported them across the Atlantic Ocean in awful conditions. These people were sold into a life of slavery in the Americas. They were forced to work with no pay and many were treated poorly. This was known as the transatlantic slave trade. This period of history resulted in the deaths of millions of African people.

## The Triangular Trade



The transatlantic slave trade is often referred to as the Triangular Trade. There were three parts to the trade.

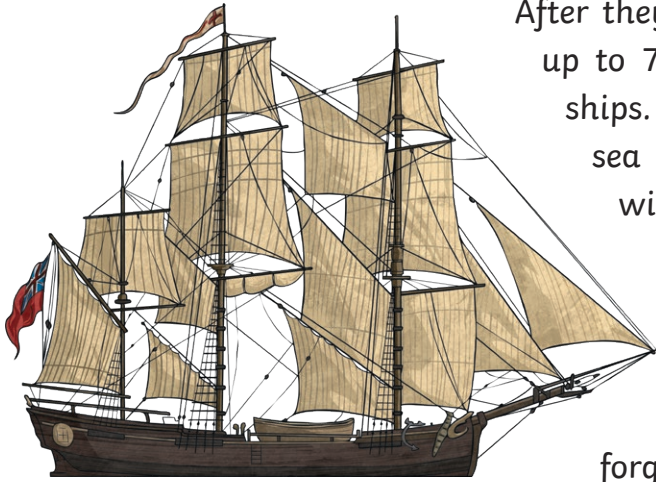
1. Firstly, large ships travelled to West Africa carrying goods such as cloth and guns. These goods were exchanged for men, women and children who had been taken from their villages.
2. During the **middle passage** across the ocean, conditions were dangerous to health. The overcrowded and dirty ships spent months crossing the ocean and many people died. When the ships arrived, their passengers were sold at **auction** and set to work.

Thus, African people were bought and sold as if they were no more than an item in a shop. They were now known as slaves who were forced to work growing crops with little chance of payment or freedom.

3. Lastly, the third stage of trade involved the ships returning with goods grown by the African people. These goods (such as sugar and cotton) were sold to the people of Britain and other European countries. The triangle was complete and the process would begin again.



## What Happened to the African Villagers on the Middle Passage?



After they had been taken from their homes, up to 700 villagers were forced onto huge ships. Many of them had never seen the sea before. They were chained together with little room to move.

If they survived the **middle passage**, they were sold into slavery. People were separated from their friends and family. They were told to forget their earlier life and they were given a new name. On the plantations, slaves worked for 14 hours or more each day. If they made a mistake, or if they tried to resist or fight back, they were beaten. As a result, many slaves rebelled. Some even gained freedom and fought for an end to slavery.

### Olaudah Equiano's Story

Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) was kidnapped in West Africa and sold as a slave. Fortunately, he was able to survive and pay for freedom. He became an abolitionist – someone who was fighting for an end to slavery – and travelled to Europe to share his autobiography. It was published over 200 years ago and contained details of his dreadful experiences during the journey across the Atlantic and of slavery. Due to its honesty, it prompted many readers to question the concept of slavery and therefore became a powerful argument for its abolition.

### Did You Know...?

Olaudah Equiano toured Britain so he could share his story. He talked in Birmingham, Nottingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Cambridge.

### Abolition at Long Last

Eventually, people in Britain began to recognise that slavery was unethical. In 1807, the Houses of Parliament banned the slave trade. However, it was not until 1833 when slaves were finally freed across the British Empire.

In the USA, slavery continued even after its **abolition** because there was lots of disagreement. Plantation owners in southern states became very wealthy due to slave labour but those in the north disagreed with the use of slaves. As a result, the American Civil War (1861-1865) happened.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s arose because of the continued **segregation** of black and white Americans over 100 years after slavery was officially ended.



### Glossary

<b>abolition</b>	The action of abolishing a system – in this case, slavery.
<b>auction</b>	A public sale where goods are sold to the highest bidder.
<b>cargo</b>	Goods carried on a ship, aeroplane or lorry.
<b>middle passage</b>	The journey that captured Africans took across the Atlantic Ocean, under unsanitary conditions.
<b>plantation</b>	An estate on which crops, such as coffee, sugar and tobacco, are grown.
<b>segregation</b>	The enforced separation of different ethnic groups in a country.
<b>unethical</b>	Morally wrong and unacceptable behaviour.

# Questions

1. During which period in history was the transatlantic slave trade? Tick **one**.

- During the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- 1 000 years ago
- Before the 15<sup>th</sup> century
- Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

2. Which statements describing The Triangular Trade are true? Tick **two**.

- There were four parts to the trade.
- Goods were exchanged for men, women and children.
- Goods were sold at auction.
- Sugar and cotton were sold to people in Britain and other countries.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Lastly, the \_\_\_\_\_ stage of trade involved the \_\_\_\_\_ returning to \_\_\_\_\_ with goods grown by the African people.

4. What were conditions like for the villagers on the middle passage?

---

5. Find and copy the word which describes what happened to the slaves' friends and family.

---

6. Why do you think that many slaves rebelled against their situation?

---

---

7. How do you think Olaudah Equiano's story helped to abolish slavery?

---

---

8. Eventually, people in Britain began to recognise that slavery was unethical. Why do you think it took so long for slavery to be abolished? Use evidence from the text.

---

---

---

# Answers

1. During which period in history was the transatlantic slave trade? Tick **one**.

- During the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- 1 000 years ago
- Before the 15<sup>th</sup> century
- Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

2. Which statements describing The Triangular Trade are true? Tick **two**.

- There were four parts to the trade.
- Goods were exchanged for men, women and children.
- Goods were sold at auction.
- Sugar and cotton were sold to people in Britain and other countries.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Lastly, the **third** stage of trade involved the **ships** returning to **Britain** with goods grown by the African people.

4. What were conditions like for the villagers on the middle passage?

**The ships were overcrowded and dirty and many people died. The villagers were chained together with little room to move.**

5. Find and copy the word which describes what happened to the slaves' friends and family.

**separated**

6. Why do you think that many slaves rebelled against their situation?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think they could not bear to be slaves any longer and wanted to escape their harsh lives.**

7. How do you think Olaudah Equiano's story helped to abolish slavery?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Olaudah Equiano's story told readers all about his dreadful experiences and persuaded readers to think differently. He also toured Britain so he could share his story.**

8. Eventually, people in Britain began to recognise that slavery was unethical. Why do you think it took so long for slavery to be abolished? Use evidence from the text.

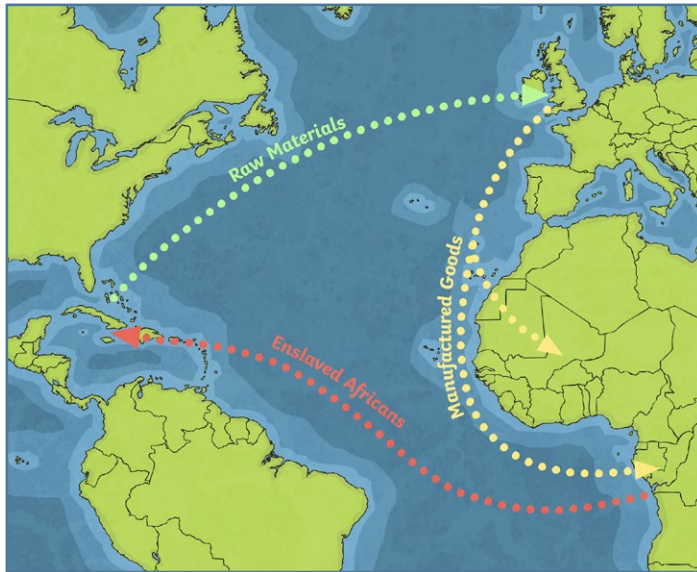
**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it took a long while because some people did not want to change. For example, plantation owners became very wealthy and also people in Britain liked to have coffee, sugar and tobacco.**



# The Transatlantic Slave Trade

For over 400 years, Europeans enslaved millions of people from parts of West Africa, transporting them across the Atlantic Ocean in awful conditions. These people were sold into a life of unpaid work and cruelty in the Americas. This was known as the transatlantic slave trade: a brutal period of history which resulted in the deaths of millions of African people.

## The Triangular Trade



The Triangular Trade describes the three stages of the transatlantic slave trade during its most prolific period, between 1740 and 1810.

Firstly, huge ships travelled to West Africa carrying goods such as cloth, guns and ironware. After they arrived, these goods were exchanged for men, women and children who had been forcibly taken from their villages.

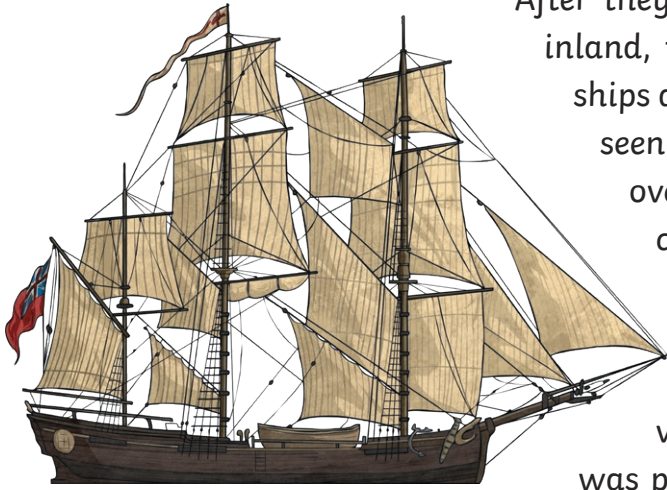
Throughout the middle passage across the ocean, people endured terrible conditions. The unsanitary, overcrowded and filthy ships spent months at sea. Many people died. When the ships arrived in the West Indies, their passengers were sold at auction to the highest bidder.

Thus, African people were bought and sold as if they were no more than an item in a shop. They were now known as slaves and were forced to work mercilessly on the plantations, growing crops with little chance of payment or freedom and labouring for long hours each day.

The third stage of trade involved the ships returning with goods grown on the **plantations** by the enslaved Africans. These goods (such as sugar, coffee and cotton) were then sold to the people of Britain and beyond, completing the triangle. The process would then begin again.



## What Happened to the African Villagers on the Middle Passage?



After they had been taken from their homes inland, the villagers were forced onto huge ships at the coast. Many of them had never seen the sea before. Ships often carried over 700 people at a time. They were chained together with little room to move because they were thought of simply as cargo by the ships' captains. The conditions were very dangerous to health: air quality was poor and many grew ill or even died as a result of illness, disease or maltreatment.

If they survived the middle passage, they were sold into slavery. People were separated from their friends and family and told to forget their earlier life. Slave owners gave them a new name and made them learn a new language. Slaves were then required to work for 14 hours, or even more, each day with harsh beatings for any mistakes or rebellion. However, many of the slaves did bravely rebel. Some were even able to earn their freedom and fight for an end to slavery.

### Olaudah Equiano's Story

Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) was enslaved in West Africa as a child but was fortunate enough to survive and pay for freedom. He became an abolitionist – someone who was campaigning for an end to slavery – and travelled to Europe to share his autobiography.

'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano' was published in 1789. Due to its brutally honest account of slavery, it persuaded readers to think differently. Thus, it became a powerful argument for **abolition**.

### Did You Know...?

Olaudah Equiano toured Britain in order to share his story. He spoke to audiences in Birmingham, Nottingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Cambridge.

## Abolition at Long Last

Eventually, people in Britain began to recognise that slavery was unethical. In 1807, The Houses of Parliament outlawed the slave trade. However, it was not until 1833 when slaves were finally freed across the British Empire.

In the USA, slavery continued in certain states even after it was abolished. The different attitudes of northern and southern states even led to the American Civil War (1861-1865). Furthermore, the civil rights movement of the 1960s happened because of the continued **segregation** of black and white Americans over 100 years after slavery was officially ended.



### Glossary

<b>abolition</b>	The action of abolishing a system – in this case, slavery.
<b>plantation</b>	An estate on which crops, such as coffee, sugar and tobacco, are grown.
<b>segregation</b>	The enforced separation of different ethnic groups in a country.
<b>unethical</b>	Morally wrong and unacceptable behaviour.

# Questions

1. Which phrase is most similar in meaning to **enslaved**? Tick **one**.

- To make someone a slave
- To ship people across an ocean
- To exchange people with goods
- To grow crops on a plantation

2. Which goods were exchanged for African people? Tick **two**.

- ships
- cloth
- sugar
- guns

3. Fill in the missing words.

Throughout the \_\_\_\_\_ passage across the \_\_\_\_\_, people endured \_\_\_\_\_ conditions.

4. Look at the section entitled **The Triangular Trade**. Find and copy a word which shows that people had little room to move on board the ships.

---

5. **They were now known as slaves and were forced to work mercilessly on the plantations, growing crops with little chance of payment or freedom.**

What does the word **mercilessly** mean in this sentence?

---

6. Look at the section entitled **What Happened to the African Villagers on the Middle Passage?** How did the conditions during the middle passage affect the health of African villagers on board?

---

---

7. **People were separated from their friends and family and told to forget their earlier life.**

What do you think the slave owners wanted to achieve by treating the newly enslaved Africans in this way?

---

---

8. Why do you think it was important for people such as Olaudah Equiano to talk to the citizens of Britain and Europe about slavery and abolition?

---

---

---

9. Life improved for some people during the 1800s. Do you agree or disagree? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Agree / Disagree (circle **one**)

---

---

---

# Questions

1. Which phrase is most similar in meaning to **enslaved**? Tick **one**.

- To make someone a slave
- To ship people across an ocean
- To exchange people with goods
- To grow crops on a plantation

2. Which goods were exchanged for African people? Tick **two**.

- ships
- cloth
- sugar
- guns

3. Fill in the missing words.

Throughout the **middle** passage across the **ocean**, people endured **terrible** conditions.

4. Look at the section entitled **The Triangular Trade**. Find and copy a word which shows that people had little room to move on board the ships.

**overcrowded**

5. **They were now known as slaves and were forced to work mercilessly on the plantations, growing crops with little chance of payment or freedom.**

What does the word **mercilessly** mean in this sentence?

**It means they were forced to work without mercy under hard conditions such as long hours each day.**

6. Look at the section entitled **What Happened to the African Villagers on the Middle Passage?** How did the conditions during the middle passage affect the health of African villagers on board?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The conditions affected the villagers badly. The conditions were very dangerous to health because air quality was poor and many grew ill or died. They were chained together with little room to move.**

7. **People were separated from their friends and family and told to forget their earlier life.**

What do you think the slave owners wanted to achieve by treating the newly enslaved Africans in this way?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think they wanted to achieve control over the slaves and to make sure they worked hard on the plantations.**

8. Why do you think it was important for people such as Olaudah Equiano to talk to the citizens of Britain and Europe about slavery and abolition?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it was important because otherwise they would not have known about the cruel conditions of slavery and what was happening on the middle passage. Also, they should know how their sugar, coffee and tobacco is grown.**

9. Life improved for some people during the 1800s. Do you agree or disagree? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

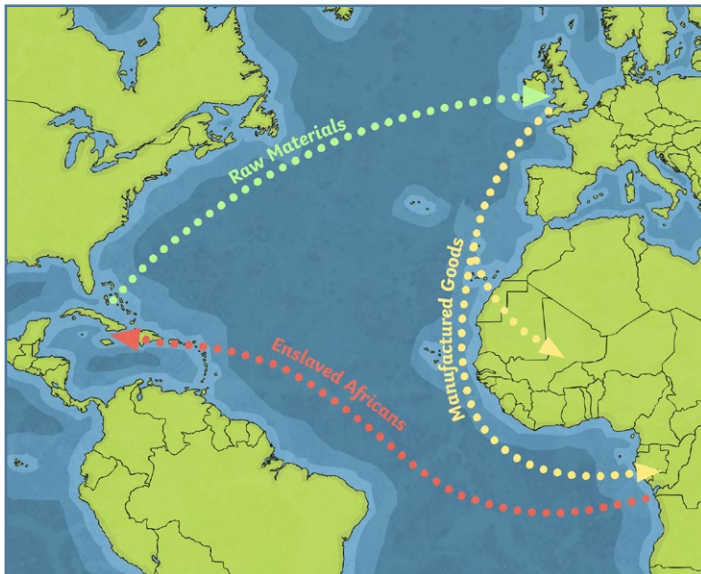
Agree / Disagree (circle **one**)

**Pupils' own responses either agreeing or disagreeing with the statement, such as: Life was a little better for some people in some ways. Slaves were freed across the British Empire from 1833. However, slavery continued in the USA after abolition. It also led to a war.**

# The Transatlantic Slave Trade

From the late 16<sup>th</sup> until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans were responsible for the enslavement of millions of people from parts of West Africa, transporting them across the Atlantic Ocean in the most awful of conditions to be inhumanely sold into a life of hard, unpaid labour and brutality in the Americas. This was known as the transatlantic slave trade: a bleak and shameful period in history to which the deaths of millions of Africans can be attributed.

## The Triangular Trade



The Triangular Trade is the name used to describe the three stages of the transatlantic slave trade. Its most prolific period was between 1740 and 1810, with estimates of around 60 000 people being enslaved each year.

Initially, vast ships travelled to West Africa carrying goods, such as cloth, guns and ironware. Upon arrival, these goods would be bartered for

men, women and children who had been forcibly removed from their villages.

For the notorious middle passage across the ocean, these people endured unsanitary conditions below deck; overcrowded and filthy ships spent months at sea and many people died as a result. When the ships arrived in the West Indies, their weakened passengers were sold at auction to the highest bidder.

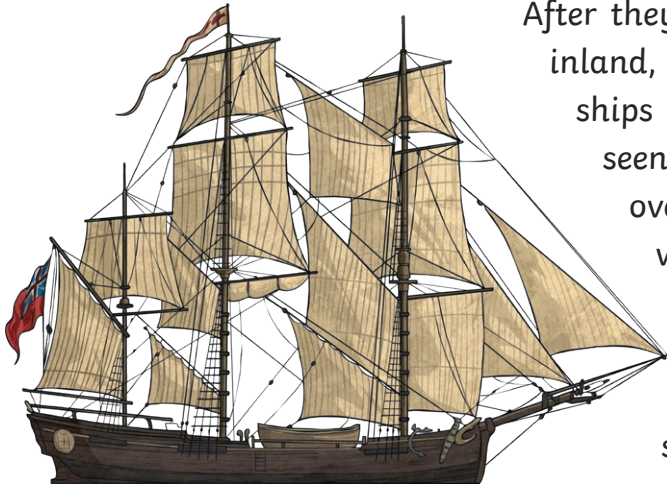
Thus, African people were bought and sold as possessions and became slaves, forced to work mercilessly on plantations, with little chance of payment or freedom.

The third stage of trade involved the ships returning to Europe with goods grown by the enslaved African villagers. These goods, including sugar, coffee, cotton and tobacco, were then sold to the people of Britain and beyond, completing the triangle which was built on the exploitation of many people. The process would then begin again.





## What Happened to the African Villagers on the Middle Passage?



After they had been taken from their homes inland, the villagers were forced onto huge ships at the coast, many having never seen the sea before. Ships often carried over 700 people at a time. They were chained together in cramped conditions because they were considered cargo by the ships' captains. Below deck, the air was stifling and pungent and conditions were unsanitary: many people grew ill.

If they survived the middle passage, once sold into slavery, life did not improve. Slave owners sought to crush the slaves' spirits and control them: they were given a new name, made to learn a new language and forced to adopt new customs. Daily life on a plantation involved working 14 hours, or more, a day with harsh beatings for any **transgressions**. However, despite the brutal consequences, many of the slaves did bravely resist and some were even able to earn their freedom and join the fight for the abolition of slavery.

### Olaudah Equiano's Story

Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) was enslaved in West Africa (in modern-day Nigeria) as a child but was fortunate enough to survive and pay for his freedom. He became an **abolitionist** and travelled to Europe to share his life story and promote his autobiography.

'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano' was published in 1789. Due to the fact it recounted his own traumatic experiences of slavery, it became a powerful, persuasive argument for its abolition.

### Did You Know...?

Olaudah Equiano raised awareness of slavery by lecturing in Birmingham, Nottingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Cambridge.

## Abolition at Long Last

Eventually, British citizens began to recognise that slavery was unethical. In 1807, the House of Parliament outlawed the slave trade itself; however, it was not until 1833 that slaves began their freedom across the British Empire.

In the USA, there was great resistance to abolition and slavery continued, partly due to the fact that wealthy plantation owners continued to prosper from slave labour. Disagreements about slavery between Americans led to the American Civil War (1861-1865). Furthermore, the civil rights movement of the 1960s arose due to the continued **segregation** of black and white Americans over 100 years following abolition.



### Glossary

<b>abolitionist</b>	Someone who campaigns for abolition (the action of abolishing a system – in this case, slavery).
<b>segregation</b>	The enforced separation of different ethnic groups in a country.
<b>transgression</b>	An act that goes against a law, rule or code of conduct; an offence.

# Questions

1. Which statements about the transatlantic slave trade are true? Tick **two**.

- People were shipped across an ocean under atrocious conditions.
- Slaves were paid to work hard.
- Millions of Africans died as a result of its brutality.
- Only men were bought and sold.

2. **Upon arrival, these goods would be bartered for men, women and children who had been forcibly removed from their villages.**

What does the word bartered mean? Tick **one**.

- given away
- captured
- exchanged, without using money
- grown on plantations

3. Look at the section entitled The Triangular Trade. Give two examples of goods which were sold during the last stage of trade.

---

---

4. Find a word which describes how the villagers had little room to themselves below deck.

---

5. Look at the section entitled **What Happened to the African Villagers on the Middle Passage?** The author describes the air as **stifling and pungent**. What does this tell us about conditions below deck on the ships on the middle passage?

---

6. Summarise what happened to the passengers if they survived the middle passage and arrived at their destination.

---

---

---

7. Why do you think some enslaved people tried to resist slavery, despite the consequences?

---

---

8. Explain what people such as Olaudah Equiano hoped to achieve by visiting so many cities in Britain.

---

---

---

9. In your own words, explain why you think there was **great resistance to abolition** and it took so long for slaves to be freed.

---

---

---

10. Life improved for some people during the 1800s. Do you agree or disagree? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Agree / Disagree (circle one)

---

---

---

# Questions

1. Which statements about the transatlantic slave trade are true? Tick **two**.

- People were shipped across an ocean under atrocious conditions.
- Slaves were paid to work hard.
- Millions of Africans died as a result of its brutality.
- Only men were bought and sold.

2. **Upon arrival, these goods would be bartered for men, women and children who had been forcibly removed from their villages.**

What does the word bartered mean? Tick **one**.

- given away
- captured
- exchanged, without using money
- grown on plantations

3. Look at the section entitled The Triangular Trade. Give two examples of goods which were sold during the last stage of trade.

**A choice of two from: sugar, coffee, cotton or tobacco.**

4. Find a word which describes how the villagers had little room to themselves below deck.

**overcrowded**

5. Look at the section entitled **What Happened to the African Villagers on the Middle Passage?** The author describes the air as **stifling and pungent**. What does this tell us about conditions below deck on the ships on the middle passage?

**It tells us that it was hard to breathe, hot and very smelly. As a result, many people became ill because conditions were unsanitary.**

6. Summarise what happened to the passengers if they survived the middle passage and arrived at their destination.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: If they survived, their lives did not improve. They were told given a new name and forced to adopt new customs. If they made any mistakes they were given harsh beatings.**

7. Why do you think some enslaved people tried to resist slavery, despite the consequences?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think they tried to resist because they could not stand their harsh treatment and want to stand up to the slave owners. They refused to be controlled and were willing to take the risk of being beaten.**

8. Explain what people such as Olaudah Equiano hoped to achieve by visiting so many cities in Britain.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think he hoped to let everyone know about the harsh treatment of slaves during the slave trade. He wanted people to know how their sugar and coffee were grown. He wanted more support for an end to slavery.**

9. In your own words, explain why you think there was **great resistance to abolition** and it took so long for slaves to be freed.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think many people made a lot of money from slavery and they would not have wanted it to end. Also, many people, did not fully understand what was really happening so it took a long time for them to realise.**

10. Life improved for some people during the 1800s. Do you agree or disagree? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Agree / Disagree (circle one)

**Pupils' own responses either agreeing or disagreeing with the statement, such as: Life was a little better for some people in some ways. Slaves were freed across the British Empire from 1833. However, slavery continued in the USA after abolition. It also led to a war.**