

Atlantic Slave Trade

Additional Primary Sources

Sources 1 and 2

Equiano, Olaudah, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano: Or, Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London: 1789).

p.33:

The next day proved a day of greater sorrow than I had yet experienced; for my sister and I were then separated, while we lay clasped in each other's arms. It was in vain that we besought them not to part us; she was torn from me, and immediately carried away, while I was left in a state of distraction not to be described. I cried and grieved continually; and for several days I did not eat any thing but what they forced into my mouth.

pp.48-9:

One day, when we had a smooth sea, and a moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen, who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings, and jumped into the sea: immediately another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would soon have done the same, if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were, in a moment, put down under the deck; and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat to go out after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully, for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate; hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade.

To read more about Olaudah Equiano on the British Library website, [click here](#).

Understanding Slavery's website has a great feature on him, [click here](#).

His entire book can be found online, [click here](#).

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Additional Primary Sources

Sources 3 and 4

Park, Mungo, *Travels in the interior districts of Africa...* (London: Bulmer & Co., 1799).

p.292:

...it seems to be the universal wish of mankind, to spend the evening of their days where they passed their infancy. The poor Negro feels this desire in its full force. To him no water is sweet but what is drawn from his own well; and no tree has so cool and pleasant a shade as the tabba tree of his native village.

p.298:

If my sentiments should be required concerning the effect which a discontinuance of that commerce [the Transatlantic Slave Trade] would produce on the manners of the natives, I should have no hesitation in observing, that, in the present unenlightened state of their minds, my opinion is, the effect would neither be so extensive or beneficial, as many wise and worthy persons fondly expect.

Mungo Park, born at Foulshells near Selkirk (which has a statue of him today), was a Scot who experienced many travels in Africa, reporting some of them back to the African Association in 1799. He died on his last expedition, which can be [read about here](#).

His book can be downloaded [here](#).

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Additional Primary Sources

Sources 4, 5 and 6

Falconbridge, Alexander, *Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (London: Phillips, 1788).

pp.19-20:

The men Negroes, on being brought aboard the ship, are immediately fastened together, two and two, by handcuffs on their wrists and by irons rivetted on their legs. They are then sent down between the decks and placed in an apartment partitioned off for that purpose. The women also are placed in a separate apartment between decks, but without being ironed. An adjoining room on the same deck is appointed for the boys. Thus they are all placed in different apartments.

But at the same time, however, they are frequently stowed so close, as to admit of no other position than lying on their sides. Nor will the height between decks, unless directly under the grating, permit the indulgence of an erect posture; especially where there are platforms, which is generally the case.

pp.20-21:

In each of the apartments are placed three or four large buckets, of a conical form, nearly two feet in diameter at the bottom and only one foot at the top and in depth of about twenty-eight inches, to which, when necessary, the Negroes have recourse.

It often happens that those who are placed at a distance from the buckets, in endeavouring to get to them, tumble over their companions, in consequence of their being shackled. These accidents, although unavoidable, are productive of continual quarrels in which some of them are always bruised. In this distressed situation, unable to proceed and prevented from getting to the tubs, they desist from the attempt; and as the necessities of nature are not to be resisted, ease themselves as they lie.

This becomes a fresh source of boils and disturbances and tends to render the condition of the poor captive wretches still more uncomfortable. The nuisance arising from these circumstances is not infrequently increased by the tubs being much too small for the purpose intended and their being usually emptied but once every day. The rule for doing so, however, varies in different ships according to the attention paid to the health and convenience of the slaves by the captain....

Alexander Falconbridge was a young doctor from Bristol who, after a year working in Bristol Infirmary, became a surgeon aboard a slave ship.

To read more about Alexander Falconbridge on the British Library website, [click here](#).

His book can be downloaded [here](#).

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Additional Primary Sources

Source 7, 8 and 9

Anon., *A Letter, from ****, in London, to his friend in America, on the Subject of the Slave-Trade (New York: Samuel Loudon, 1784).**

p.10:

Slavery is the absolute dependence of one man upon another; and is, therefore, as inconsistent with all ideas of justice, as despotism is with the rights of nature. It is a crime so monstrous against the human species, that all those who practise it deserve to be extirpated from the earth. It is no little indirect attack upon the safety and happiness of our fellow creatures, but one that boldly strikes at the foundations of all humanity and justice.

Robbers invade the property, and murderers the life of human beings; but he that holds another man in bondage, subjects the whole sum of his existence to oppression, bereaves him of every hope, and is, therefore, more detestable than robber and assassin combined.

p.26:

Has gold entirely blinded your eyes and stupified your heart? Can you see, can you feel no harm therein?

p.28:

Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air.

The entire letter can be downloaded [here](#).

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Additional Primary Sources

Sources 10, 11 and 12

Thompson, Thomas, *The African Trade for Negro Slaves, shewn to be Consistent with principles of Humanity, and with the Laws of Revealed Religion* (Canterbury: Simmons and Kirky, 1772).

pp.11-12:

...we consider the buying and selling negroes, not as a clandestine or piratical business, but as an open, public trade; encouraged and promoted by acts of parliament. For so, if being contrary to religion, it must be deemed a national sin; and as such may have a consequence, that would be always to be dreaded.

p.21:

Slavery then had its origins from a principle of humanity, and averseness to shedding blood. Conquerors, rather than slay those whom they took in war, chose to dispose of them in a milder way, and sold them into servitude.

p.23:

By the law of nature, all persons are free. But absolute freedom is incompatible with civil establishments. Every man's liberty is restricted by national laws...

Thompson was a missionary who first went to the American colonies and then West Africa. He was an apologist for the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and in 1772 wrote the 30 page tract that these extracts were drawn from.

The full tract can be downloaded [here](#).

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Additional Primary Sources

Source 13

Wheatley, Phillis, *Poems on various subjects, religious and moral* (Aldgate: A. Bell, 1773).

p.18:

On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA.

‘T’WAS mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there’s a God, that there’s a *Saviour* too:
Once I redemption neither fought or knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
“Their colour is a diabolic die.”
Remember, *Christians, Negros*, black as *Cain*,
May be refin’d, and join th’ angelic train.

Although Phillis Wheatley was a slave in the North American colonies, her poem is included to provide greater context, and give voice to a female slave.

Read more about her from the National Women’s History Museum, [click here](#).

Her full book can be downloaded, [click here](#).

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Additional Primary Sources

Sources 14 and 15

MacBrair, R. Maxwell, *A Grammar of the Mandingo Language: with Vocabularies* (London: Wesleyan Methodist Missionary, 1842).

p:42:

cow, *ninsemuso*
sheep, *sajio*
ram, *sakotong*
ewe, *samsuno*
horse, *suo*
mare, *sauno, sumuso*
elephant, *sammo*
ass, *falo*
leopard, *solo*
lion, *jatto*
hyena, *suluo*
camel, *nyonkome*
baboon, *kong*
monkey, *sulo*
wild cat, *bambango*

p:45:

keep, *muta*
kill, *fa*
laugh, *jelle*
lay down, *landi*
leave, *tu, bo*
lengthen, *janyandi*
lie down, *la*

The Mandingo peoples were from the Western coast of Africa. These extracts are to provide context of the enslaved peoples.

MacBrair's entire book can be found online, [click here](#).