

Name _____

Period _____

Mercantilism and Triangle Trade – The Economic Foundations of America

Document 1:

Mercantilism was an economic system used by nations to gain power and wealth by acquiring colonies throughout the world.

Even before the first boatload of Englishmen landed at Jamestown, Virginia, European countries had experimented with empire-building, engaging in the system of **mercantilism**. Although it was never a cohesive system, and changed from nation to nation, its variations had similar characteristics and, most important, a shared economic philosophy. First and foremost was state control over human behavior: the belief that many aspects of a nation's economy had to be regulated. With the acquisition of colonies came the recognition that their purpose was to satisfy the needs of the mother country. The regulation of economic activities in the colonies, then, centered around the accumulation of wealth for the European powers, at the colonies' expense. The degree of control varied according to the nation. In the 1500s, Spain and Portugal exerted strict control over their colonial inhabitants. However, the British were more lax in governing their colonies. (source: <http://www.landandfreedom.org/ushistory/us3.htm>)

How did mercantilism benefit the “Mother Country”? _____

Document 2:

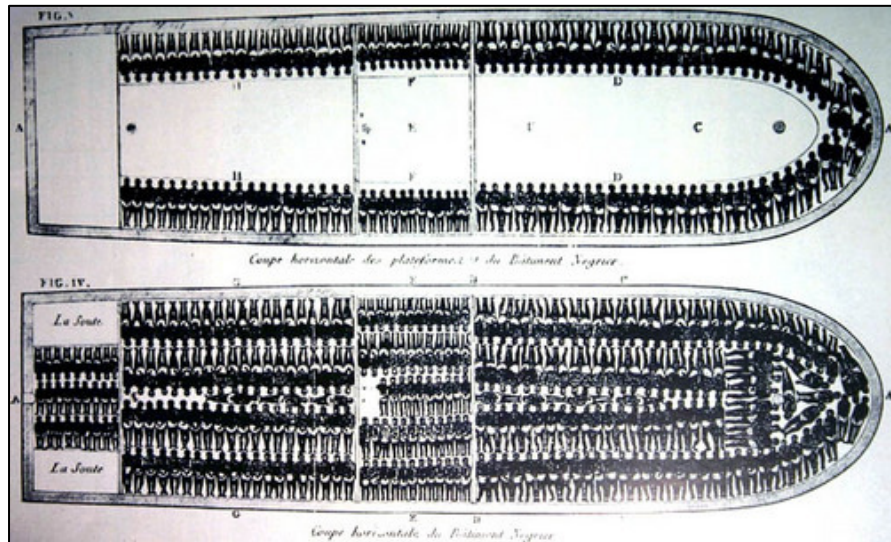
A slave's journey to a life of servitude often began in the interior of Africa with his or her capture as a prize of war, as tribute given by a weak tribal state to a more powerful one, or by outright kidnapping by local traders.

When the Negroes, whom the black traders have to dispose of, are shown to the European purchasers, they first examine them relative to their age. They then minutely inspect their persons, and inquire into the state of their health, if they are afflicted with any infirmity, or are deformed, or have bad eyes or teeth; if they are lame, or weak in their joints, or distorted in the back, or of a slender make, or are narrow in the chest; in short, if they have been, or are afflicted in any manner, so as to render them incapable of much labor; if any of the foregoing defects are discovered in them, they are rejected. But if approved of, they are generally taken on board the ship the same evening. The purchaser has liberty to return on the following morning, but not afterwards, such as upon reexamination are found exceptionable. -Dr. Alexander Falconbridge 1778 (source: <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/slavetrade.htm>)

Why would people who were not completely healthy be rejected for the slave trade? _____

Document 3:

This diagram from 1788 depicts the storage capacities of the British slave ship *Brookes*. By packing in slaves much like sardines in a can, the ship owner was able to legally transport 454 individuals this way. By pushing captives up inside the legs of other slaves, captains could illegally increase their capacity to 600 or more. (source: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/historyofus/tools/browser5.html>)



Why would captains risk breaking the law to pack 600 people into their ships? _____

Document 4:

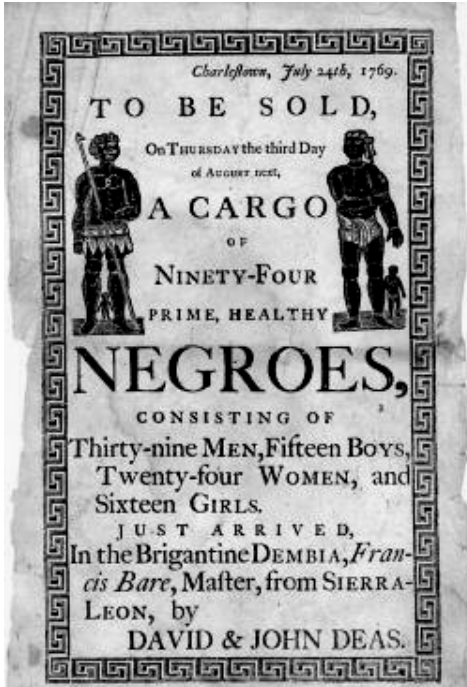
Here is the slave deck of the *Wildfire*, brought into Key West on April 30, 1860. This drawing was made from a daguerreotype photograph.



What does this drawing illustrate about life for slaves during the Middle Passage?

What does this picture and the diagram in Document 3 illustrate about how Africans were viewed by Europeans?

Document 5:

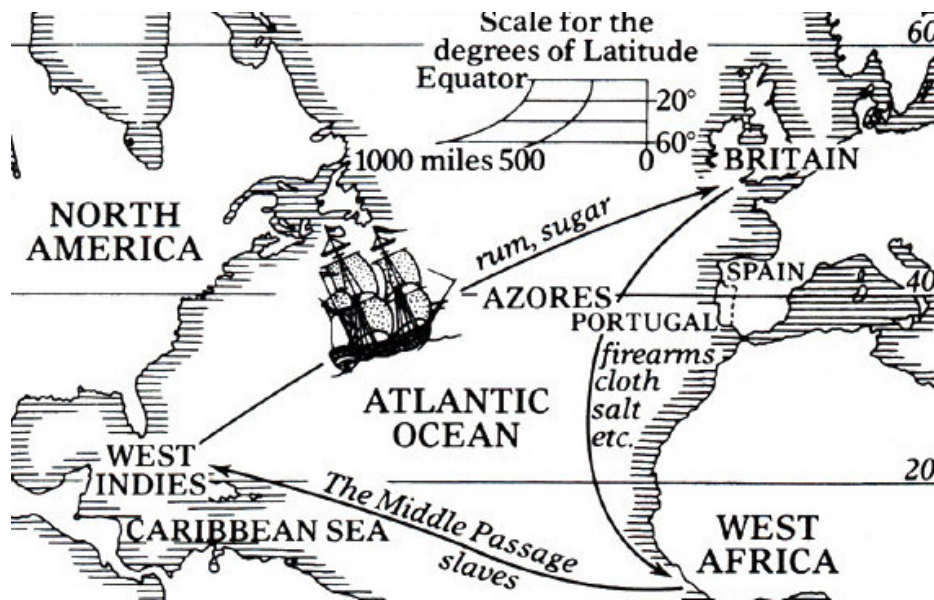


What is the purpose of this poster?

How did this benefit ship captains and plantation owners?

(source: http://www.ngbiwm.com/Exhibits/middle_pass.htm)

Document 6: Triangle Trade was the system used by colonial powers to trade finished goods for slaves from Africa and raw materials from colonies in North America.



How did nations such as Great Britain benefit from Mercantilism and Triangle Trade?

Homework: Imagine that you are a businessman or a ruler in the 1700's. Would you support Triangle Trade? Are there any other ways to make a large profit for you or your nation? Please answer in the form of a paragraph.