

MAKE YOUR OWN HISTORY

CIVICS LESSON

Olaudah Equiano

Transatlantic Slave Trade



By the 1480s Portugal was active in capturing and transporting Africans to the Americas. From then to the 19th century, an estimated 10 - 12 million enslaved Africans were taken by European slave traders across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas.

Beginning in the early 1500s, Spanish conquistadors followed the example of the Portuguese merchants in raids along the West coast of Africa to capture Africans for the slave trade. The slave merchants also bought slaves from local African-European and African dealers who had put together a trading alliance that cap-

tured individuals and groups for sale. Dutch, English and French merchants surpassed their Portuguese and Spanish competitors as the foremost traders of enslaved Africans during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Atlantic passage, or Middle Passage, was brutal for its enslaved passengers, not only because of the harsh treatment by the ship's crew, but also due to the unsanitary conditions of the overcrowded slave ships. Because hundreds of Africans were packed tightly below deck, it has been estimated the 15 - 25% of them died on the slave trips as they traveled from Africa to the Americas.

Throughout the 19th century European countries involved in the slave trade came to terms with inhumanity of the practice and by the 20th century it was generally an awful thing in the rear view mirror.

Equiano survived the Middle Passage and went on to a life of amazing success. He was the exception to the rule.

Equiano was the epitome of perseverance. He refused to give up on his success journey. Learn from his example.