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The African Slave Trade
- ✓ **GRAPHIC ORGANIZER**
The Triangular Trade
- ✓ **MAP** The Triangular Trade
- ✓ **PRIMARY SOURCE**
 - Life on a Plantation
 - Conditions on a Slave Ship



Lesson 1

Colonial Economy

ESSENTIAL QUESTION *How does geography influence the way people live?*

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The unique resources and conditions that existed in each colony helped shape colonial economies and ways of living.

Making a Living in the Colonies

GUIDING QUESTION *How did the economic activity of the three regions reflect their geography?*

Life in colonial America was based largely on agriculture. Most colonists farmed or made their livings from businesses related to farming, such as milling flour. Geography played an important role in the colonies' economic development. Colonists learned to adapt to the climate and terrain of the region where they lived.

Commercial New England

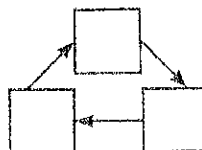
In New England, long winters and thin, rocky soil made large-scale farming difficult. Most farmers here practiced **subsistence farming** (suhb • SIS • tuhns)—producing enough to meet the needs of their families, with little left over to sell or trade. New England farmers often depended on their children for labor. Everyone in the family worked—spinning yarn, milking cows, fencing fields, and sowing and harvesting crops. Women made cloth, garments, candles, and soaps for their families.

Throughout New England were many small businesses. Nearly every town had a mill for grinding grain or sawing lumber. People used waterpower from streams to run the mills. Large towns attracted skilled craftspeople. Among them were blacksmiths, shoemakers, furniture makers, and gunsmiths.

Reading HELPDESK

Taking Notes: Describing

As you read, use a diagram like this one to describe the triangular trade routes.



Content Vocabulary

- subsistence farming
- cash crop
- diversity
- triangular trade
- slave code

Shipbuilding was an important New England industry. The lumber for building ships came from the region's forests. Workers floated the lumber down rivers to shipyards in coastal towns. The Northern coastal cities served as centers of the colonial shipping trade, linking the Northern Colonies with the Southern Colonies—and America with other parts of the world.

Fishing was also important. Some New Englanders ventured far out to sea to hunt whales for oil and whalebone.

The Middle Colonies

Most people in the Middle Colonies were farmers. This region enjoyed more fertile soil and a slightly milder climate than New England. Farmers here plowed and planted larger areas of land and produced bigger harvests than did New Englanders. In New York and Pennsylvania, farmers grew large quantities of wheat and other **cash crops**—crops that could be sold easily in markets in the colonies and overseas.

Farmers sent wheat and livestock for shipment to New York City and Philadelphia, which became busy ports. By 1760, New York, with 14,000 people, and Philadelphia, with 19,000 people, were two of the largest cities in the American colonies.

Like the New England Colonies, the Middle Colonies also had industries. Some were home-based crafts, such as carpentry and flour making. Others were larger businesses—lumber mills, mines, ironworks, small-scale manufacturing, and so on.

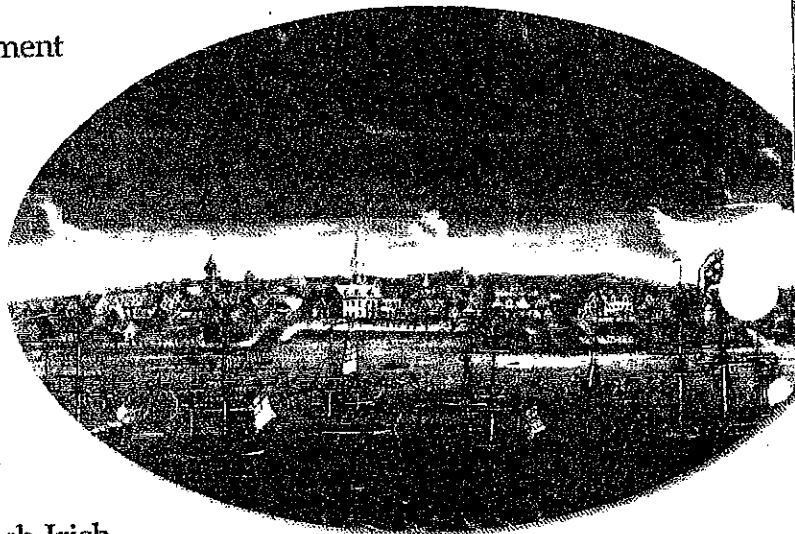
The Middle Colonies attracted many Scotch-Irish, German, Dutch, and Swedish settlers. Using agricultural methods developed in Europe, these immigrants became successful farmers. They gave the Middle Colonies a cultural **diversity** (duh • VUHR • suh • tee), or variety, not found in New England.

Life in the Southern Colonies

The Southern Colonies had rich soil and a warm climate well suited to certain kinds of farming. Southern farmers could plant large areas and produce harvests of cash crops, such as tobacco or rice. Most settlers in the Southern Colonies made their living from farming.

New York City, shown here in the late 1750s, was a bustling center of trade and population in the American colonies.

► **CRITICAL THINKING**
Analyzing What geographic features helped New York thrive as a seaport?



subsistence farming producing just enough to meet immediate needs
cash crop a crop that can be sold easily in markets

diversity variety, such as of ethnic or national groups

Little commerce or industry developed there. For the most part, London merchants rather than local merchants from the colonies managed Southern trade.

Most large plantations were located in the Tidewater, a region of flat, low-lying plains along the seacoast. Planters built their plantations on rivers so they could ship their crops to market by boat. A plantation was like a small village. It had fields stretching out around a cluster of buildings, including cabins, barns, and stables, as well as carpenter and blacksmith shops, storerooms, and kitchens. A large plantation might have its own chapel and school. Small plantations often had fewer than 50 enslaved workers. Large ones typically had 200 or more.

Between the Tidewater and the Appalachian Mountains lay a region of hills and forests known as the backcountry. Its settlers included hardy newcomers to the colonies. They grew corn and tobacco on small family farms. Some had one or two enslaved Africans to help with the work. Backcountry farmers greatly outnumbered large plantation owners. Still, the plantation owners were wealthier and more powerful. They controlled the economic and political life of the region.

Tobacco and Rice

Tobacco was the **principal** cash crop in Maryland and Virginia. Growing tobacco and preparing it for sale required a lot of labor. At first, planters used indentured servants to work in the fields. These servants worked for a time and then went free. When indentured servants became scarce and expensive, Southern planters began using enslaved Africans instead.

Slaveholders with large farms grew wealthy by growing tobacco. They sold most of it in Europe. Sometimes, though, there was too much tobacco on the market—more than buyers wanted. To sell the extra tobacco, planters had to lower their prices. As a result, their profits fell. Some planters switched to other crops, such as corn and wheat.

The geography of South Carolina and Georgia helped make rice the main cash crop there. In low-lying areas along the coast, planters built dams to create rice fields, called paddies. Planters flooded the fields when the rice was young and drained them when the rice was ready to harvest.

Work in the rice paddies was very hard. It involved standing knee-deep in the mud with no protection from the blazing sun or biting insects. To do this hard work, rice growers **relied** on slave labor.

Reading **HELP**DESK

Academic Vocabulary

principal most important
rely to depend upon

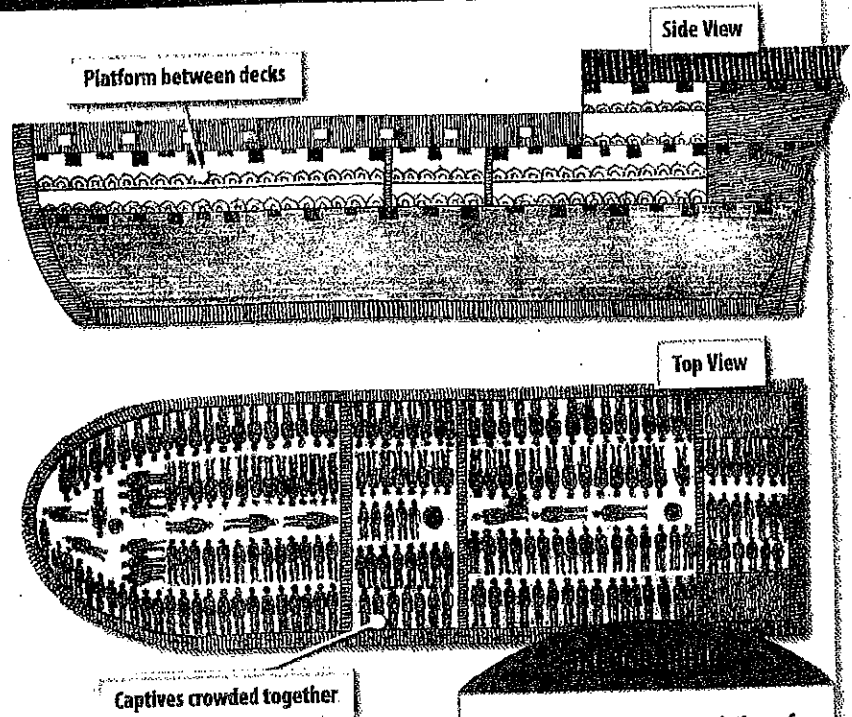
Build Vocabulary: *Related Words*

If the word *principal* means “most important,” what can you say about the principal of your school?

AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE 1450–1870

Destination	Total
British America/United States	427,000
Mexico and Central America	274,000
West Indies	4,040,000
Spanish South America	522,000
Güianas	531,000
Brazil	3,677,000
Europe	175,000

Captains of slave ships added platforms between decks to fit more captives onto their ships. In the filthy, crowded slave compartments, disease—and rebellion—spread rapidly. On some ships, as many as half of the Africans died.



Rice proved to be an even more profitable crop than tobacco. Prices rose steadily as rice became popular in Europe. By the 1750s, South Carolina and Georgia had the fastest-growing economies in the colonies.

PROGRESS CHECK

Summarizing Why was agriculture so important to the economy of the Southern Colonies?

Millions of Africans were victims of the slave trade.

1 CALCULATING

What was the total number of Africans shipped from Africa to the countries and regions shown?

2 CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Conclusions What do you think was the impact of the slave trade on African cultures?

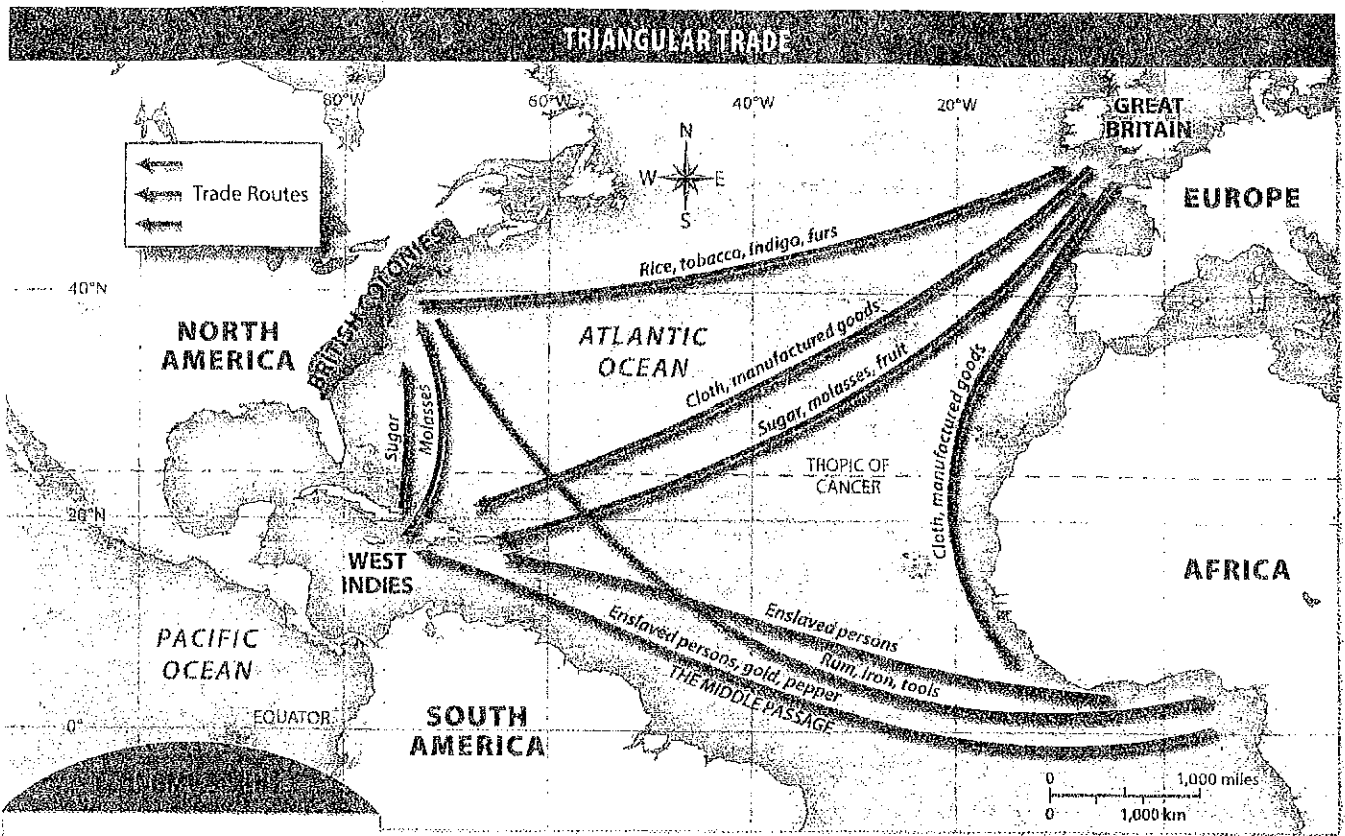
The Growth of Slavery

GUIDING QUESTION *Why were enslaved Africans brought to the colonies?*

By the time Europeans were sailing to the Americas, slavery was widely practiced in West Africa. Many West African kingdoms enslaved those they defeated in war. Slave traders from Arab lands bought some of these enslaved people. Others were forced to work in gold mines or farm fields.

The arrival of Europeans in the Americas created a huge new demand for enslaved workers. Colonists needed a large labor force to work on their plantations. West African slave traders met this need. They sold captives they gained through wars and raids. Slavery and the slave trade became major parts of the colonial economy.

For enslaved Africans, the voyage to America usually began with a march to a European fort on the West African coast. There, they were sold to Europeans, who loaded them on ships.



On this map, you can see how the trade routes between the colonies, Great Britain, and Africa formed triangles. The triangular trade supported the economies of all three regions—though at a terrible human cost. The map shows which goods and products came from which locations.

- 1 **IDENTIFYING** From where did the American colonies receive molasses?
- 2 **CRITICAL THINKING**
Analyzing What was the main role of Great Britain in the triangular trade?

The Middle Passage

The trip across the ocean was called the “Middle Passage.” This name came from the fact that it was often the second, or middle, leg of the three-part route known as the **triangular trade** (try • ANG • gyuh • luh). People called this route “triangular” because, as the ships traveled between their destinations, their paths formed the three sides of a triangle.

The Middle Passage was a terrible ordeal. Chained together for more than a month, prisoners could hardly sit or stand. They received little food or water. Africans who died or became sick were thrown overboard. Those who refused to eat were whipped.

Those who survived the Middle Passage faced another terror when they reached American ports—the slave market. There they were put up for sale as laborers to plantation owners.

The Life of the Slave

Some enslaved Africans on plantations did housework, but most worked in the fields. Many enslaved workers suffered great cruelty. Owners of large plantations hired overseers, or bosses, to keep the enslaved Africans working hard.

Reading HELPDESK

triangular trade trade route between three destinations, such as Britain, West Africa, and the West Indies

slave code rules focusing on the behavior and punishment of enslaved people

Many colonies had **slave codes**, rules governing the behavior and punishment of enslaved people. Some did not allow enslaved workers to leave the plantation without the slaveholder's written permission. Some made it illegal to teach enslaved people to read or write. Enslaved people were seldom allowed to move about freely or gather in large groups. Punishments ranged from whipping for even minor misdeeds to hanging or burning to death for more serious crimes. Enslaved workers who ran away were punished severely when caught.

Although enslaved Africans had strong family ties, their families were often torn apart when a slaveholder sold a spouse, parent, or child. Many of the enslaved found strength in their African roots. They developed a culture that drew on the languages, customs, and religions of their African homelands.

Some enslaved Africans learned trades, such as carpentry, blacksmithing, or weaving. Skilled workers could sometimes set up shops, sharing their profits with the slaveholders. Those lucky enough to be able to buy their freedom joined the small population of free African Americans.

Critics of Slavery

Not all colonists believed in slavery. Many Puritans, for example, refused to hold enslaved people. In Pennsylvania, Quakers and Mennonites condemned slavery. Eventually, the debate over slavery would spark a bloody war between North and South.

PROGRESS CHECK

Describing What role did Africans play in the economy of the Southern Colonies?



On large plantations, the owner or a hired overseer looked on while enslaved workers worked in the fields from sunrise to sunset.

LESSON 1 REVIEW

Review Vocabulary

1. Define the following terms by using them in a sentence about colonial farming.
 - a. subsistence farming
 - b. cash crop
2. Explain the significance of the following terms by using each in a sentence.
 - a. triangular trade
 - b. diversity
 - c. slave code

Answer the Guiding Questions

3. **Comparing and Contrasting** How did agriculture differ in the three colonial regions?
4. **Identifying Main Ideas** What was the Middle Passage, and what made it so horrible?
5. **NARRATIVE WRITING** As a New England farmer, write a letter to relatives in Europe describing your family's daily life as subsistence farmers.