

## The Atlantic Slave Trade, Part 2

The transatlantic slave trade had several consequences for Africans. However, the extent to which the trade affected the Africans is a much-debated topic, partially due to the lack of concrete evidence and partially due to the differences in the state of affairs among African societies.



**African middlemen often captured slaves in the interior of the continent and marched them to the coast to be sold.**

One of the effects the trade had on Africa was the degradation of the Africans and the beginning of racism. Ideas of European “racial superiority,” which took root in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, eventually led to the occupation of Africa by several European powers.

One of the most commonly cited consequences was the depopulation among the Africans, especially the strong, young males. But the evidence shows regional differences of the effects of the slave trade. The states of Benin and Yoruba were affected little by the trade, while the areas along the Slave Coast yielded moderate amounts of population loss, and the Kongo-Angola region witnessed major depopulation. Despite these specific examples, the slave trade did not have an influential impact on African society as a whole, with respect to depopulation. Accurate information on estimates of the African population during the four centuries is lacking. It is also not known exactly how many of the slaves were captured as a result of slave raids or local wars. Furthermore, the export of 11.5 million slaves to the Americas was spread over 400 years and extended over vast areas. The impact of the European slave trade on Africa was minimal compared to the impact of European colonialism in the twentieth century.

The slave trade was also economically and politically destructive for some areas in West Africa. The trade in slaves was replaced by trade in cheap industrial goods, which led Africa to become dependent on European goods rather than producing their own goods. It undermined the local production of cotton and metal goods and discouraged expansion. It also deprived many African societies of their producers. In fact, capitalism was not to develop in Africa until the end of the nineteenth century, and when it did, colonialism put a stop to it.

While the slave trade did destroy many societies in the near-coastal areas, further inland some Africans gained from the trade. Small states began to take shape while others prospered. The Yoruba Kingdom grew in size and strength during the eighteenth century. A new empire, the Asanti empire, rose in central and coastal Ghana. By the nineteenth century, a number of West African societies along the Niger Delta were producing their own palm oil instead of slaves. They had their own plantations, but they did not have industrial production. However, their efforts were dampened by European colonialism.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Challenges

1. Which people felt they were "racially superior" to the Africans?

2. Which members of the African population were especially decreased by the slave trade?

3. What region of Africa experienced major depopulation?

4. For how many years were slaves exported to the Americas?

5. What type of trade was conducted after the slave trade stopped?

6. What goods were being produced in Africa before European colonization?

7. Name two empires that prospered during the slave trade years.

8. Where was palm oil being produced?