

Triangular Trade Routes

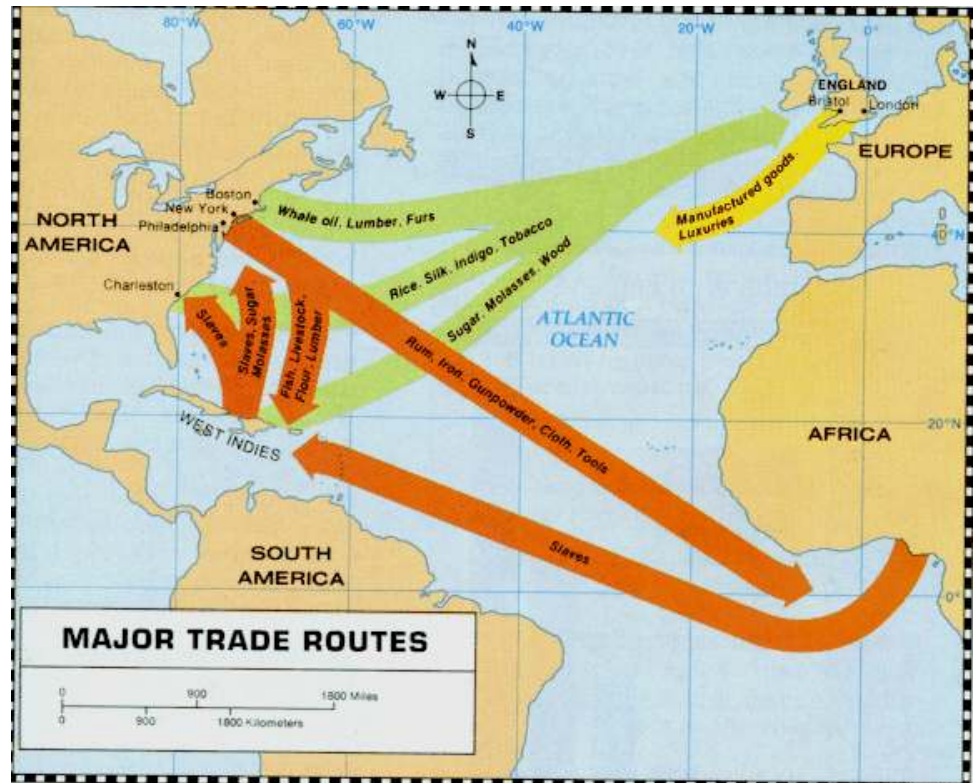
The Atlantic Ocean lies between the Americas and the continents of Europe and Africa. In the centuries after 1492, as European countries conquered land in the Americas and created overseas colonies, merchants established trade routes that connected all three continents -- creating what became known as the Triangular Trade.

The Atlantic trade routes stretched across the Atlantic in seemingly all directions. A typical shipment of goods from Europe might include beads, cloth, rum, salt, or weapons. The shipment would go to Africa, where the goods would be traded for slaves.

A ship leaving Africa for America would have hundreds of enslaved people, tightly packed in horrific conditions for the journey to their new "home" on plantations in South America, islands in the Caribbean and North America. The voyage between Africa and the Americas became known as the Middle Passage.

A low estimate of the number of Africans who were shipped as slaves to the Americas is 10 million. That number doesn't include the thousands who died along the way. Some studies have concluded that 15-25 of every 100 Africans died on those voyages.

Once in the Americas, the ship would unload the slaves and take on goods to trade in Europe. Some of these goods might include molasses, rum, sugar, or tobacco. This final trip would complete the triangle between Europe, Africa, and the Americas.



It should be noted that not all ships made this giant triangular trip. Many ships simply sailed back and forth between Europe and the Americas, or between the Americas and Africa. However, the trade routes that were established in the 1500s-1700s connected people on all three continents.

True or False Questions

1. The triangular trade route was used by European merchants. _____
2. The second leg of the route was nicknamed the "Middle Path." _____
3. Slaves were only taken to work on plantations in the 13 colonies. _____
4. Weapons were taken from Europe to Africa. _____
5. European merchants could make a lot of money trading on the triangular trade route. _____
6. Slaves were taken from the Americas to Europe. _____
7. Cotton was taken from the Americas to Europe. _____
8. Rum was taken from Europe to the Americas. _____

Short Answer Questions

1. Who benefited the most from the Triangular Trade? Why?

2. Who benefited the least from the Triangular Trade? Why?

3. Describe the kinds of things that were traded between the Americas and Europe.

For more information and interactive activities about the triangular trade routes (especially about the Middle Passage and the slave trade), check out this web address:

<http://www.nmm.ac.uk/freedom/viewTheme.cfm/theme/triangular>