

# Slave Trade DBQ

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**Directions:** The following question is based on the accompanying Documents 1-12. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. Your teacher may provide additional instructions and advice to use when answering the question below.

**Prompt:** Analyze the various arguments toward and the motivations behind the Atlantic slave trade from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries.

**Historical Background:** In early modern Europe, the Atlantic slave trade was developed between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. As a result, millions of Africans were transported to the Americas via the Middle Passage, a cruel and barbaric journey that was part of the triangular trade routes.

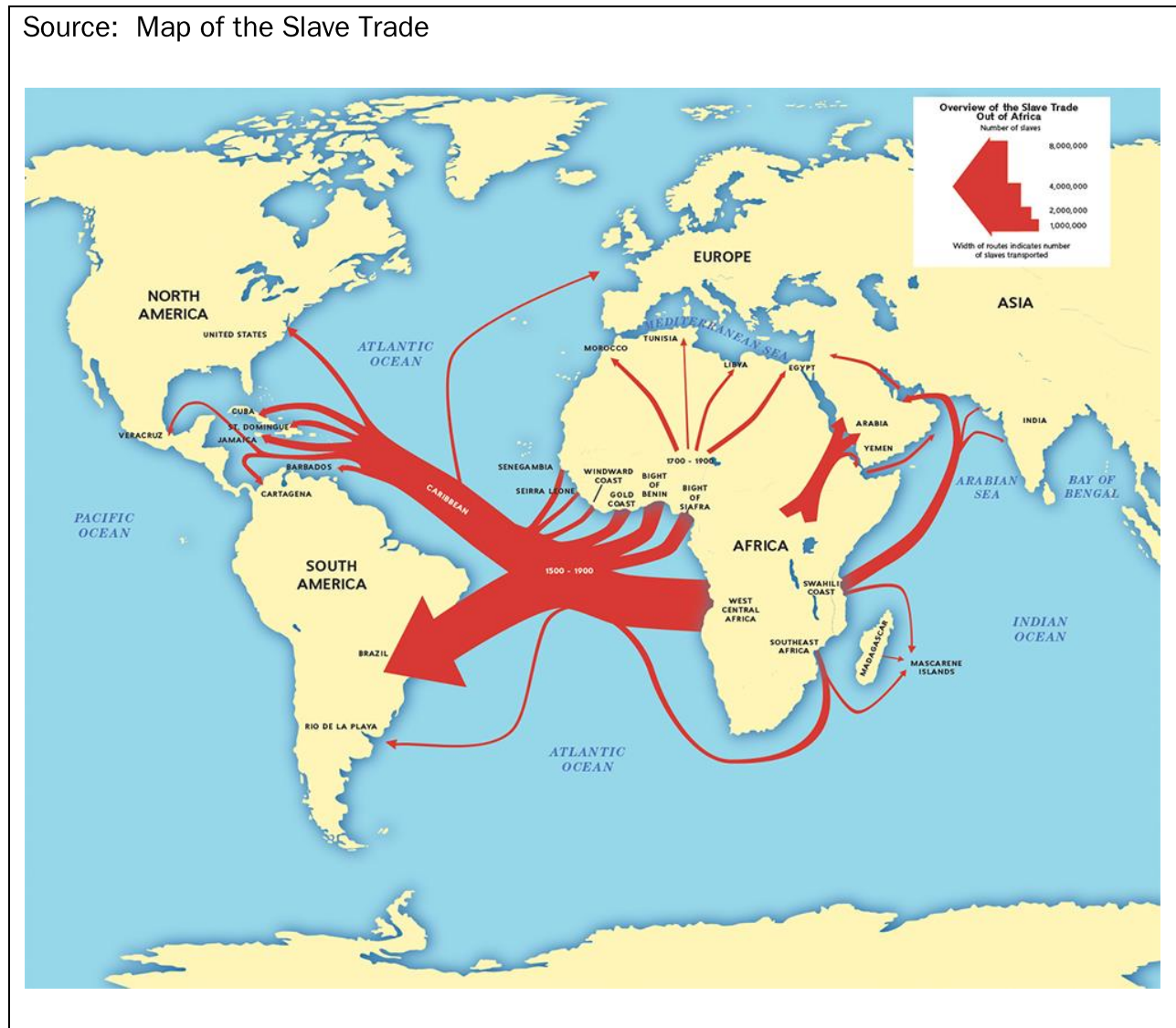
## Document 1

Source: Pope Alexander VI, The Papal Bull, *Romanus Pontifex*, to the King Alfonso of Portugal explaining his verdict regarding newly “discovered” lands, 1455.

We, after weighing with due care the matters put before us altogether and individually, and considering that we have conceded in other letters of ours to the aforementioned King Alfonso among other things the full and free capacity to invade, conquer, take by storm, defeat, and subjugate and Saracens and other Pagans as well as whatever dominions, possessions, movable and immovable property are detained or possessed by them; and to seize and appropriate for himself and for his successors their own persons in perpetual servitude, as well as their kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and property, and to convert these to his own use and utility and to that of his successors.

## Document 2

Source: Map of the Slave Trade



### Document 3

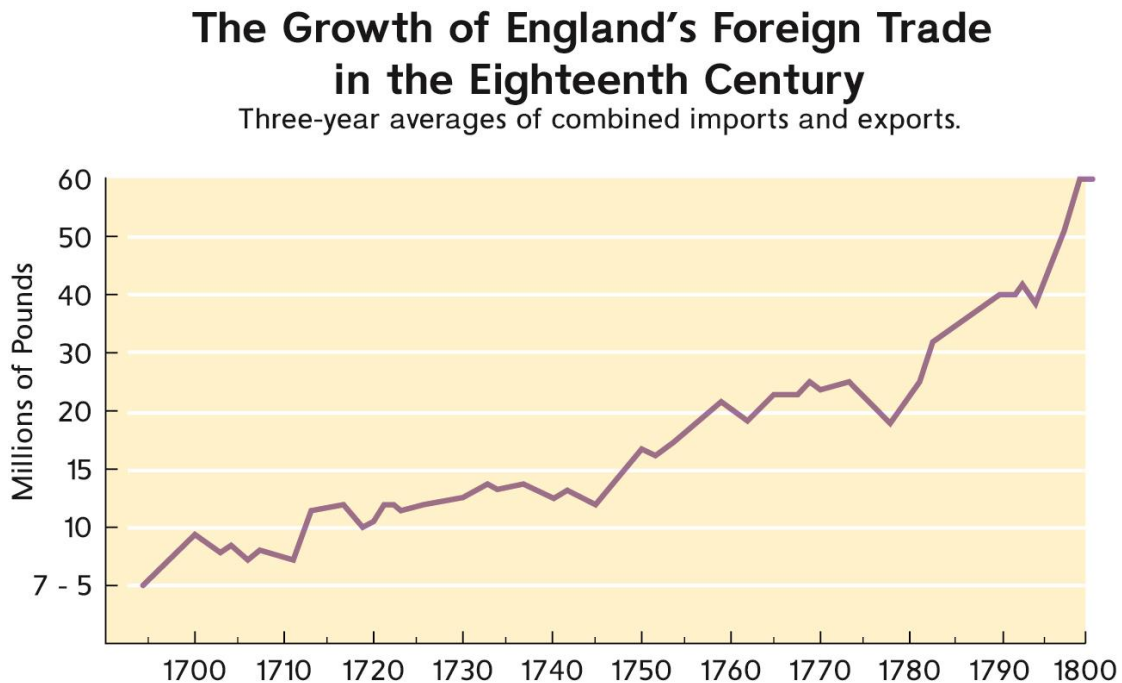
Source: Chart—Magnitude of the Slave Trade, estimate of the number of persons removed from Africa and transported as slaves to the New World during the entire period of the Atlantic slave trade.

British Caribbean	1,665,000
British North America (to 1786)	275,000
United States (after 1786)	124,000
French Caribbean	1,600,000
Dutch Caribbean	500,000
Brazil	3,646,000
Spanish America	1,552,000

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### Document 4

Source: Chart—The Growth of England's Foreign Trade in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Three-year averages of combined imports and exports.



### Document 5

Source: Malachy Postlethwayt, British economist. *The National and Private Advantages of the African Trade Considered*, 1746.

The Negroe-Trade therefore, and the natural consequences resulting from it, may be justly esteemed an inexhaustible fund of Wealth and Naval Power to this Nation. And by the overplus of Negroes above what have served our own Plantations, we have drawn likewise no inconsiderable quantities of treasure from the Spaniards.

### Document 6

Source: William Beckford, English plantation owner in Jamaica, *Remarks upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, impartially made from a local experience of nearly thirteen years in that island*, referring to the British abolitionist movement, 1788.

If Great Britain be seriously bent upon humanity, let it enlarge the scale of benevolence, and take in...all colours, and all conditions of men; and reform at home before it venture to make romantic trials of compassion abroad!

### Document 7

Source: William Cowper, English poet and evangelical Christian, *Pity for Poor Africans*, 1788.

I own I am shock'd at the purchase of slaves,  
And fear those who buy them and sell them are knaves;  
What I hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans  
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.

I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,  
For how could we do without sugar and rum?  
Especially sugar, so needful we see?  
What? give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea!

Besides, if we do, the French, Dutch, and Danes,  
Will heartily thank us, no doubt, for our pains;  
If we do not buy the poor creatures, they will,  
And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.

### Document 8

Source: William Wilberforce, English politician, abolitionist, and evangelical Christian, speech in Parliament, May 1789.

I mean not to accuse any one, but to take the shame upon myself, in common, indeed, with the whole parliament of Great Britain, for having suffered this horrid trade to be carried on under their authority. We are all guilty – we ought all to plead guilty, and not to exculpate\* ourselves by throwing the blame on others.

\*to be clear of guilt

### Document 9

Source: William Fox, radical activist and pamphleteer, *An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum*, calling for a boycott of slave-produced sugar, 1791.

...The wealth derived from the horrid trade, has created an influence that secures its continuance....

If we purchase the commodity we participate in the crime. The slave-dealer, the slave-holder, and the slave driver, are virtually the agents of the consumer, and maybe considered employed and hired by him to procure the commodity.

## Document 10

Source: James Gillray, political satirist and caricaturist, *Anti-Saccharrites, or John Bull and his family leaving off the use of sugar*, 1792.



Source credit: Rischgitz/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Pictured are King George III, Queen Charlotte, and their daughters. The King is saying 'O delicious! Delicious!' as he sips his tea without sugar. The Queen is encouraging her daughters to drink the unsweetened tea: 'O, my dear Creatures, do but Taste it! You can't think how nice it is without sugar; and then think how much Work you'll save the poor Blackamoors by leaving off the use of it! And above all, remember how much expence (sic) it will save your poor Papa! O it's charming cooling Drink.'

## Document 11

Source: Jean-Baptiste Debret, French painter and artist, *Slavery in Brazil*, early 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Source credit: The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images

## Document 12

Source: Dr. David Livingstone, Scottish explorer and missionary, letter to his friend James Young regarding the impact of the continued East African slave trade, 1863

We are in a desert produced by one year's slaving and a famine caused partly by drought chiefly by the slaving panic for all along the streams and rivers the "Haughs"\* can yield crops of maize every three months. The survivors are quite apathetic—cultivating none and actually eating the self-sown stalks of corn which in a month would yield grain. It is a sad sight to see.

\*meadow in a river valley