



# The Atlantic Slave Trade

## TEACHERS NOTES

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This Timemap can be used in two different ways:

- 1) as a whole-class presentation, using a whiteboard or projector, or
- 2) as a student-centred learning tool for individual or small group work.

### **What does this Timemap of contain?**

The Timemap contains a sequence of maps showing the rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

The content falls into two (unequal) parts. The first looks at the history of the trade:

- the African and European backgrounds
- the origins of the trade, and some of its original causes and motivations
- its early expansion under the Portuguese
- its later expansion under the Dutch, French and British
- the involvement of Africans as participants in the trade
- the impact the trade had on the different regions involved

The second set of maps looks at the experiences of those involved, particularly the slaves themselves, from the time of their enslavement in Africa to their first years on the sugar plantations, and the European crews. It focusses on the period when the Atlantic Slave Trade was at its height, in the mid-late 18th century.

### **What is the Timemap's purpose?**

In sum, the purpose of the Timemap is to give students an overall understanding of the Atlantic Slave Trade:

- When and why did it begin?
- What factors made it expand?
- What were the key stages?
- Who were the people involved, and why?
- How was the trade conducted?
- What was the impact of the trade on different regions?
- What diverse experience did the different people involved have?

The maps have a considerable amount of information linked to them - more than is offered in most text books. This information is accessed by clicking on the "i" button, just below the date, and then clicking the hotspots which appear in the maps.

Also just below the date is a "Q". This button accesses one or more simple questions about that map. These questions are designed to encourage students to study the maps for the information they contain.

The Timemap is accompanied by these teachers' notes, which contain suggestions for using the resource with students (see below). These suggestions are also set out in a student's worksheet.

## 2. USE WITH STUDENTS

The Timemap can be used in one of two ways.

### With the whole class

If a teacher wishes to acquaint students briefly with the topic before moving on to another topic in world history, then this Timemap is ideal. It makes a superb whiteboard resource, and can be used as a whole-class presentation. It offers an effective, visual overview of the origins and rise of Islam, and will give students a grasp of key events and developments.

### As a student-based resource

This Timemap can be used as the main resource for a learning unit on the early history of Islam lasting several lessons. It has a large amount of information embedded in it - more than students will find in most text books - and is designed to be used by students, as individuals or in small groups, independently of the teacher.

**The information is accessed by clicking on the "i" button, just below the date, and then clicking the hotspots which appear in the maps.**

Also just below the date is a button labelled "Q". This button accesses one or more simple questions about the map - questions designed to get students looking at the information in the maps in a focussed way.

If your intention is to introduce your students to the origins and early history of Islam, then get them to work through the questions on the maps, either individually or in small groups.

These questions are ideal for bolstering students' knowledge about the topic.

If, however, you want students to look at the topic more deeply and more thoughtfully, then a series of suggested activities are set out below, section 3, and in the worksheet. These activities are designed to enhance students' historical understanding of such issues as chronology, change and continuity, causation, and interpretation.

If you do not have time for your students to tackle all these activities, choose one or more which are most appropriate to your students' abilities.

### 3. SUGGESTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The following activities are also set out in a Students' Worksheet, which accompanies these notes.

#### 1. Chronological Activity

*This simple exercise is designed to develop students' sense of chronology.*

EITHER

Place the following in chronological order:

The English and French get involved in the Slave Trade  
Sugar plantations are established in Brazil  
Sugar plantations are established in Madeira  
The Dutch get involved in the Slave Trade  
Sugar plantations are established in Sao Tome  
Sugar plantations are established in the Caribbean

OR

Draw a timeline of the Atlantic Slave Trade up to 1750.  
Place key events on it.

*No right answers here, but students have to give reasons for including or excluding events.*

#### 2. Analysis

*The purpose of this exercise is to encourage students to think about the nature of historical processes – and how that nature changes over time: different factors at play, different kinds of events, different results, and so on.*

Divide the history of the Atlantic Slave Trade into two, three or four (your choice) different phases, from the time when the Portuguese first became involved in the trade to the mid-18th century.

*Again, no right answers here, but students have to give reasons for their decision.*

What were the distinguishing characteristics of each phase?

#### 3. Victims or perpetrators?

*The past is full of myths, and it is the job of the historian to treat sweeping ideas with critical faculties intact.*

The Atlantic Slave Trade is sometimes portrayed as a episode in which innocent black races where the passive victims of cruel whites.  
How far is this true, would you say?  
Use the information provided in the maps, and if you have time, other sources as well.

*For students able to think about the question, and for those who have been able to do some more research on this issue, you might also ask,*

Do you feel that the information presented in these maps is biased, or not?

#### 4. Diverse experiences

*This question also encourages students to get behind the stereotypes and examine this episode as a historical process more deeply.*

What was different, and what the same, in the experiences of a) the crew and b) the cargo, of a slaving ship of the mid-18th century...

- in terms of treatment and comfort?
- in terms of mortality?

#### 5. Causes and consequences

*This is a question about causation.*

List the reasons for the rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Divide them into those which their roots in:

Europe

Africa

The Caribbean

Now list the consequences of the Slave Trade for:

The Caribbean

Africa

Europe

#### 6. Global Connections

*This is a question about global connections - the linked fate of peoples thousands of miles apart, caught up in the same broad historical episode. It is a question which some teachers may not wish to ask - on the face of it it casts Europeans in a very poor light. However, there can be no doubt that the coming of Europeans into the Americas and Africa did have an adverse impact on both groups. Teachers may wish to underscore the fact that Europeans had no monopoly on evil, as evidenced by the existence of cruelty (including slavery) in both native American and African societies.*

What, do you think, is the link between the impact of the coming of Europeans on Native Americans, and the impact upon Africans?

In your judgement, which group suffered most from the coming of Europeans?

Activity 7: Interpretation

*This encourages students to think about how the significance of a famous personality within a nation's history can be differently interpreted when placed against a broader backcloth.*

In text books on British history, one name is associated with the rise of the slave trade above all others. This is Sir John Hawkins, the famous Elizabethan adventurer. He is often referred to as starting the trade.

How far is this interpretation of his career a fair assessment of his historical significance, do you think?

## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Timemap are to develop the following knowledge and skills in students:

### Knowledge

The information about the Atlantic Slaver Trade contained in this Timemap can provide:

- A "Big Picture" overview of the topic
- A more in-depth look at specific events and episodes - for example, how different European groups became involved
- Key features of the period, including how the trade was conducted and the experiences of the people involved
- A focus on various strands (see below \*)
- The impact of geography upon history, and in particular on how one episode affected three distinct geographical regions separated by thousands of miles
- The presence of global connections, apparent particularly in the fate of different peoples - Europeans, Africans and Native Americans - who originally lived in different parts of the world.

\*The strands of history encountered in this Timemap are:

social & economic trends: the economic motives for the trade, and its economic impact upon the different regions involved  
government: the relationship between trade and politics is apparent as both European and African governments became involved in the trade at key moments. African politics in particular was deeply affected by the trade.  
thought and religion: the Timemap deliberately does not deal with the issue of the ethics of the slave trade. However, many such questions are implied, and indeed can hardly be avoided.

### Skills

- The Timemap will give students a clear grasp of the Chronology of the Atlantic Slave Trade, up to its height in the late 18th century
- The Causation - causes and consequences - of the Atlantic Slave Trade are highlighted
- The question of Interpretation is covered with reference to the role of Sir John Hawkins (see above).