GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE SLAVE TRADE

Directions: Read and annotate the documents below and answer the questions that follow.

The Big Business of Slave Trading

. . . When in 1517 Bishop Bartolomeo de Las Casas advocated [supported] the encouragement of immigration to the New World by permitting Spaniards to import African slaves, the trading of humans in the New World formally began. Las Casas was so determined to relieve Indians of the onerous [difficult] burden of slavery that he recommended the enslavement of Africans. (Later, he so deeply regretted having taken this position that he vigorously renounced it.) The ban against the use of Africans was removed, and Charles II issued licenses to several Flemish traders to take Africans to the Spanish colonies. Monopoly of the trade went to the highest bidders. Sometimes it was held by Dutch traders, at other times by Portuguese, French, or English. As West Indian plantations grew in size and importance, the slave trade became a huge, profitable undertaking employing thousands of persons and involving a capital outlay of millions of dollars. By 1540 the annual importation of African slaves into the West Indies was estimated at 10,000. . . .

Source: Franklin and Moss, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans, Alfred A. Knopf

1. According to Franklin and Moss, what was one reason enslaved Africans were imported to the “New World” by Europeans?

. . . Large-scale sugar plantations, established first in Brazil and, after 1645, in the Caribbean islands, were enormously profitable. Plantations in Cuba gave more than a 30 percent return on capital investment; those in Barbados returned 40 to 50 percent. These islands became societies whose economies relied heavily on the labor of African captives. In 1789, one-third of the population of Cuba was comprised of Africans. Between 1730 and 1834, up to 90 percent of the populations of Jamaica, Antigua, and Grenada were Africans. In Brazil in 1800, half the population was African. . . .


2. According to the this document and the one above, what impact did the slave trade have on the population of Brazil and of the Caribbean islands, also known as the West Indies?
3. Based on this excerpt from *Africa: An Encyclopedia for Students*, state two effects of the slave trade on Africa.

**Long-Term Effects.** The trade in African slaves brought about the largest forced movement of people in history. It established the basis for black populations in the Caribbean and in North and South America. At the same time, it disrupted social and political life in Africa and opened the door for European colonization of the continent.

The shift in European demand from gold, foodstuffs, and such products to slaves changed the relations among African groups and states. The prices Africans received for slaves made it more profitable for them to take captives from their neighbors than to establish networks for producing and selling other goods. In this way the slave trade encouraged strong states to raid weaker states for slaves. As a result, many African societies were torn by organized slave wars and general banditry. Successful slave-raiding and trading societies formed new states that were dominated by military groups and constantly at war with their neighbors.


4. Examine the map above. Is what it shows consistent with the information in the documents? Explain.