

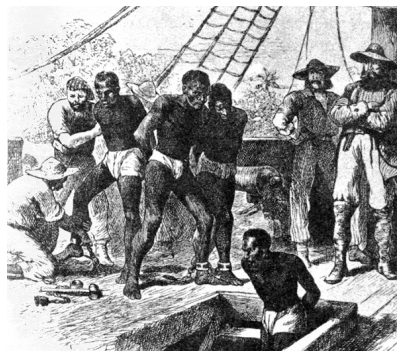
# The Slave Experience

"When we arrived at the castle, I saw [my kidnapper] take a gun, a piece of cloth, and some lead [to trade] for me... when a vessel arrived to conduct us away to the ships, there was nothing to be heard but the rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and the groans and cries of our fellow men... And when we found ourselves at last taken away, death was more preferable than life."

—*Ottobah Cugoano, Nigerian slave, 1787*

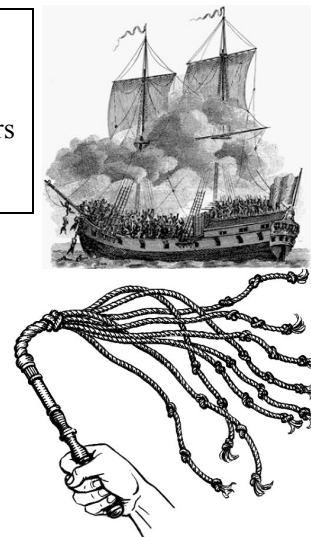
These slaves have so great a love for their country that they despair when they see that they are leaving it forever; that makes them die of grief, and I have heard merchants... say that they died more often before leaving the port than during the voyage. Some throw themselves into the sea, others hit their heads against the ship, others hold their breath to try and smother themselves, others still try to die of hunger from not eating."

—*Jacques Savary, businessman, late 1700s*



"Exercise being deemed necessary for the preservation of their health they are sometimes obliged to dance when the weather will permit their coming on deck. If they go about it reluctantly or do not move with agility, they are flogged (whipped); a person standing by them all the time with a cat-o'- nine-tails (see image) in his hands for the purpose."

—*Alexander Falconbridge, An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*



"...the excessive heat was not the only thing that rendered their situation intolerable. The deck, that is the floor of their rooms, was so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them... that it resembled a slaughterhouse."

—*Alexander Falconbridge, a surgeon aboard slave ships*

"The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for [breathing], from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the [thoughtless greed], as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs (buckets of human waste), into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable."

—*Olaudah Equiano, who was 11 years old when sold into slavery*



"Poor Daniel was lame in the hip, and could not keep up with the rest of the slaves; and our master would order him to be stripped and laid down on the ground, and have him beaten with a rod of rough briar till his skin was quite red and raw... This poor man's wounds were never healed and I have often seen them full of maggots... He was an object of pity and terror to the whole gang of slaves, and in his wretched case we saw, each of us, our own lot, if we should live to be as old."

—*Mary Prince, former slave in the Caribbean*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

# The Slave Experience

**Directions:** Read and annotate each document and answer the questions with examples from the documents.

1. According to the first document, what did Europeans trade in exchange for slaves?
2. How and why did so many slaves die on board slave ships?
3. How were slaves treated aboard slave ships during the three-month voyage to the Americas?
4. How do the documents describe the conditions on board the ships?
5. According to Mary Prince, what happened to slaves who lived to be too old to work?