

Scotland & the Slave Trade



Tobacco ships at Port Glasgow
Glasgow City Archives and Special Collections



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Scotland & the Slave Trade

This resource pack has been created for teachers and youth leaders. It provides information about Scotland and the slave trade, describing how the trade worked and how it benefitted Scotland. Three houses (cared for by the Trust) illustrate different ways in which Scotland was involved in the trade.

The transatlantic slave trade affected countries (or tribal areas) in West Africa. David Livingstone's campaign against the East African slave trade is also considered here.

The pack is suitable for anyone who wishes to learn more about the slave trade - and, in particular, its connection to Scotland



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1.0 Slave Trade

African artefact Ivory Salt Cellar (c16th century, Benin, Nigeria) made for European traders
© British Museum



1.1 Triangular Trade



African craftwork. Bronze Leopard. Benin, Nigeria.
© British Museum

The Scottish connection

The Scots and English began to own land in the West Indies and the east coast of America in the 1600s. The land was cleared for tobacco and sugar plantations, and native people and indentured servants (with few rights) worked on them. Some Scots owned tobacco plantations. Following the 1707 Act of Union between Scotland and England, Scottish merchants joined the English trade routes including 'the triangular trade'. In the 1700s, the sugar and tobacco industries grew, along with the slave trade.

The triangular trade turned people into commodities. This is how it worked:

Goods such as cloth, copper and guns were shipped from Britain to West Africa to be sold or exchanged. There, captive Africans were bought ...

... and taken to the West Indies or America and sold as slaves.

The enslaved people worked on the plantations, producing raw materials such as sugar, rum, tobacco and cotton, which were shipped to Britain. Two major trading ports were Port Glasgow and Greenock.

The plantations

By the late 1700s, one third of Jamaican plantations were owned by Scots. Some Scots liked to dress their slaves in their clan tartan. In 1790, the combined worth of exports and imports between the West Indies and Scotland totalled at least £50 million in today's currency.



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1.2 The Trader



Gold objects (Early 19th century, Asante [Ashanti], Ghana)
© British Museum

The Scottish slave trader

The slave traders fitted out and sailed the slave ships. They sailed to the West Coast of Africa where they obtained men, women, and children. The captured people were taken to the West Indies or North America to be sold as slaves.

This was an entrepreneurial business – obtaining and equipping a slave ship was expensive and slave traders often had rich backers. If business went well (the ships didn't sink and they didn't lose too many captives to disease) the slave traders could make good profits and some became rich themselves.

The African trader

European traders were susceptible to tropical disease and preferred to remain near their ships. They were also unsure of the African rulers so they used African middle-men or slave traders

The Scottish traders might buy slaves from a slave fort – or sail down the coast, drop anchor and take a rowing boat ashore. Here they would meet with African traders. Transactions were not always simple - they might need to bargain hard since there could be several groups of Europeans looking for people to buy.

The African slave trade

Slavery had existed in Africa for many years before the Triangular Trade – but it was a different system. After tribal wars, captives were often kept as slaves and had few rights. They were expected to become part of and support their new tribe, adding strength to the tribe. Some did achieve power, however.

Olaudah Equiano described being a slave in Africa before being sold to European traders (see Resources). Some historians compare African slavery to European feudalism, believing it had



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closer links to the serfdom system (peasants) of Western Europe in the Middle Ages (or 19th century Russia) – than the slavery system of the West Indies and America.

East and West Coast slave trades

The British (or transatlantic) trade, operating in the 1700s and 1800s, was based along the West coast of Africa. It has been suggested that the provision of guns, by Europeans, increased tribal wars in West Africa, and encouraged African traders to hunt and capture people from opposing tribes.

There was also a slave trade along the East coast of Africa that had been operating for many years and involved Arab traders. David Livingstone (b.1813) later campaigned against this trade. The main slave market at Zanzibar was closed in 1873 – a few weeks after Livingstone's death. (For more information, visit the David Livingstone Centre in Blantyre.)

Chattel slavery

The British slave trade turned people into goods (chattel slavery) – they became non-people. They had no rights. In the West Indies and America, there were no laws to protect them. They could be abused or even murdered without the perpetrators being punished.

The goods

The captured Africans were exchanged for goods or money. Brass manillas (brass moulded into the shape of bracelets) became a form of money in Africa. Brass and copper were valuable because the Africans were fine metal-workers. They also worked in gold.

Other goods that European traders took to Africa included cotton and guns. Britain manufactured many goods for the slave trade – from brassware to ships (and the ships' fittings, including the chains). This, along with the colonial plantations (and slave trade system), helped enrich the British economy and to spark off the Industrial Revolution.



1.3 A Lost Population



African drum. Modern European culture has been strongly influenced by African art and music.
David Livingstone Centre collection

Several million Africans were captured and transported on British ships to work on the plantations in the West Indies and America. Many people died because of the appalling conditions. So many people were taken from some tribal areas that they became de-populated.

These areas were given names by the Europeans, such as the Slave Coast, the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast. Modern countries that were affected by the slave trade include Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Benin.

Some people now use the term: Maafa. This is from a Kiswahili word meaning 'disaster' or 'tragedy'.

Suppressing a culture

The tribal areas had ancient cultures and beautiful artefacts - but those supporting the slave trade system were keen to portray the Africans as inferior people, without a culture. Since there was no written history (on parchment or paper), it was easy for the traders (and others that came after them) to suppress the evidence.



1.4 The Journey



Slave ship with enslaved people – detail
Durham University Library

The forts (or coastal dungeons)

The captured people were held in slave forts (and some in big pits). They might have to wait weeks before boarding a slave ship, while more people were rounded up. A slave trader liked to sail with a full ship. Many died of disease or hunger while still on African soil. Some forts, in coastal areas of West Africa, have been kept as evidence of the past.

The slave ship

A slave ship could take up to two months to sail to the Caribbean islands from West Africa. There might be over 400 people on one ship. Most traders packed in as many people as they could – for maximum profit. (Some opted for fewer slaves in the hope that more would survive.)

The men were chained together (with shackles and chains made in Britain), lying or crouching next to each other with barely room to move. At times, they could hardly breathe. In one report, the space allowed for each person was 125 x 45cms (4 x 1.5ft). Women and children were kept in separate areas of the ship or sometimes on deck (which made them more vulnerable).

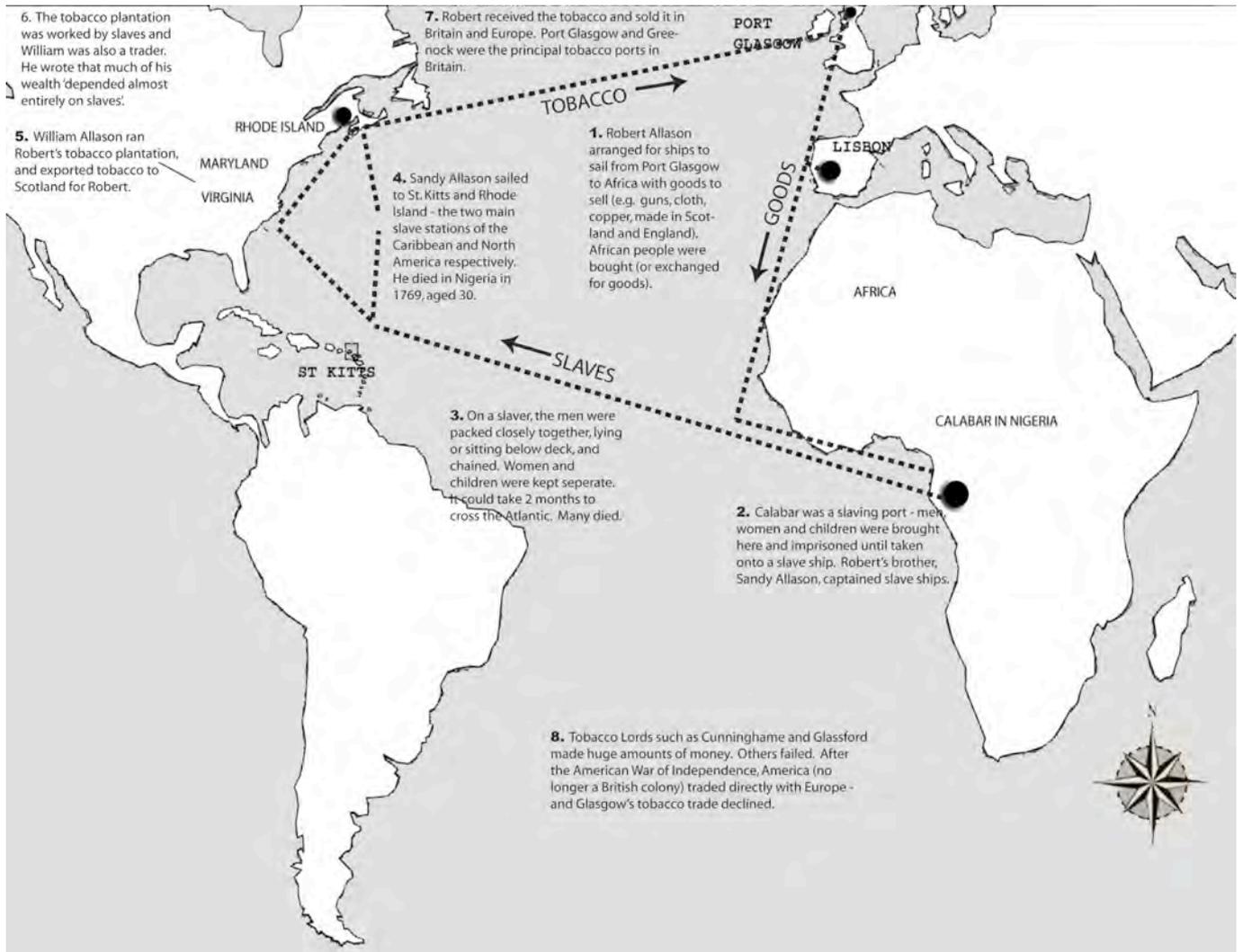
Many died en route

In 1788, one ship was reported to have carried 600 slaves – though built for a maximum of 451 people. The ships were notorious for diseases such as dysentery and smallpox. Some slaves committed suicide by jumping overboard (nets were put over the decks to prevent it) or by refusing to eat. It has been estimated that over 3 million enslaved people were transported on British ships. Another estimation is that 20% of the people died before reaching their destination. Some people put the figure as much higher.



Port Glasgow and Greenock

Robert Allason, who built Greenbank House, near Glasgow (now cared for by the NTS) took part in the Transatlantic Trade. He traded in tobacco and slaves. He sent goods from Port Glasgow to his brother Sandy, who was based in Calabar (now in Nigeria), who then took slaves on board his ship and sailed to the West Indies and America – where William Allason ran a tobacco plantation (in Virginia) that was worked by enslaved people. Robert was sent the tobacco which he sold in Britain and Europe. Port Glasgow and Greenock were the principal tobacco ports in Britain.



Map showing how the Allason brothers used the triangular trade
 NTS image



1.5 A Profitable Business



Susan Beckford, Duchess of Hamilton (1786-1859)
NTS photo

The auction

The enslaved people were treated like cattle or horses. Their condition was checked by the potential buyers and prices varied according to people's health and strength. Some buyers preferred people from certain parts of West Africa – they believed some were better workers than others, for instance. Families were often split during an auction. There are accounts of women losing all their children, and couples being sold to separate owners. They might never see each other again.

The cost of a human

The price of an enslaved person varied. William Allason (1760s-70s) talked of buying slaves from the ships (when they were not in a healthy condition), keeping them for a while and then selling them on for a good profit, for £25 - £50 (18th century prices). Good workers were sold for a great deal more – strong and 'able' men, working on a Jamaican plantation, were valued at over £100. (see A List of Slaves) Young women were valued because they could produce more slaves.

Some planters in America and the West Indies grew very rich – they usually aimed to make enough money to 'return home' to Scotland, and build themselves a fine house.

The Beckfords

The Beckford family was among the first to obtain plantations in Jamaica. They owned hundreds of enslaved people and, over three generations, grew extremely rich – but William Beckford spent much of the fortune on art treasures and a grand house. His daughter and heir, Susan, married the 10th Duke of Hamilton, and part of the Beckford collection is now on display at Brodick Castle (cared for by the NTS).



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1.6 On The Plantations



Plantation huts *The Library Company of Philadelphia*

Home and work

Enslaved people might need to build their own simple homes. Some were allowed smallholdings to grow plants, such as yams, pumpkin and plantain, to supplement their diet. There was little time for this though. Some people kept a few livestock – or caught fish - others had no meat. Slaves contracted diseases connected to poor diet and overwork.

Some men became craftsmen, tradesmen or stock-keepers. Others worked in the sugar mills or other processing areas (the sugar mills were boiling hot, dangerous places) - and there were a few domestic jobs for men and women - but the majority worked in the fields. This was back-breaking work, and the hours were very long. The average life span for some workers was about two years.



Cutting sugar cane
University Library, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



Families

Others might be more fortunate, in that they lived longer and were able to have families – but the people had no rights and families could be split up and sold, at any time, by the plantation owner. The 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act discouraged plantation owners from working people to death and then buying more from the slave ships.

It was not uncommon for plantation owners to have children by enslaved women. Sometimes the children remained slaves, but others were freed – but not the mothers.

Religion

Though many enslaved people became Christians, others continued to practise their own religions brought from Africa. Plantation owners were fearful of this. But some planters would not allow Christian ministers onto their plantations – because the ministers preached that all people were equal.

Rebellion in the West Indies

Ever since the island was first colonised by the British, in the 1600s, the Maroons of Jamaica had resisted them. An agreement was eventually reached - the Maroons would be left alone – if they left the British alone. However, in the late 1700s, some were transported to Nova Scotia (and then to Sierra Leone).

There were many runaway slaves. Some were caught and tortured or killed. But others escaped to the hills and remained free. They formed armed bands, and survived by growing crops and hunting. They used guerrilla tactics to raid the plantations. On the smaller islands, as the colonisers took over more land, the groups were unable to survive but, on the larger islands, such as Jamaica, the community increased.



Collar and chain for enslaved child
David Livingstone Centre collection.



No such thing as slavery...

In 1778, after a series of court cases (Joseph Knight versus John Wedderburn), it was ruled that slavery could not exist in Scotland. The Court of Session, Scotland's supreme civil court, upheld the Sheriff of Perth's judgement that 'the state of slavery is not recognised by the laws of this kingdom, and is inconsistent with the principles thereof'. This meant that an enslaved African brought to Scotland from the British colonies (such as from Jamaica), became a free person the moment they touched Scottish soil. Joseph Knight and all other slaves in Scotland were free.

Scipio Kennedy

Scipio Kennedy was taken from his African home when about 6 years old. He was bought by Captain Andrew Douglas. When the Captain's daughter Jean married John Kennedy, Scipio went to live with them. He lived at Culzean Castle, Ayrshire, from 1710, after Sir John inherited the castle and estate. When aged about 28, he was given his freedom - and chose to remain with the Kennedys as a paid servant. He married a local woman and they had several children. They may well have living descendants. The family probably stayed in the grounds of Culzean. Lady Jean gave Scipio 'my old servant the sum of ten pounds sterling' in her will. He died aged about eighty years old and is buried nearby at Kirkoswald. One of his sons, Douglas, and his wife, Jean Ballatine, are also buried there.'



Culzean Castle in the 1700s, as Scipio knew it
 Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, London.

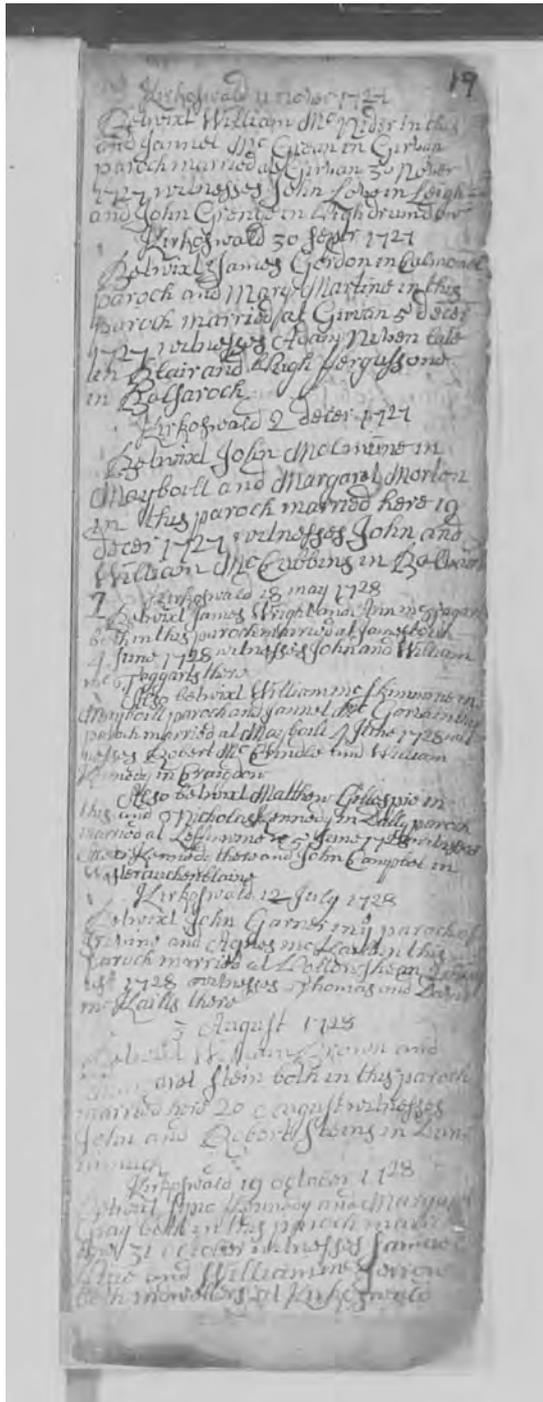


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Marriage of Scipio Kennedy and Margaret Gray.
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1.8 Abolition



Abolitionists, including Zachary Macaulay
© National Portrait Gallery, London

The abolition of the Slave Trade Act

Even though slavery had been judged illegal in Scotland (and also in England), the slave trade system was allowed to continue in the British Empire.

It wasn't until 1807, after a long campaign, that the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was passed in Britain. Abolitionists came from all walks of life – both rich and poor. Among the first were the Quakers, and many Abolitionists came from evangelical groups. Leading campaigners included William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Zachary Macaulay and Olaudah Equiano. Africans played a major role – enslaved people through resistance on the plantations, and freed Africans by contributing to the campaign in Britain.

The end of slavery

The Act stopped the transatlantic slave trade in the British Empire, and meant that plantation owners could no longer buy new slaves – but slavery was still legal.

The supporters of Abolition continued their campaign. It was during this time that women played a more visible role – though they were not allowed to vote, they organised lobbying groups in support of Abolition. The plantation owners, and others making profits from slavery, fought hard to uphold the system. However, in 1833, slavery was declared illegal in the British Empire.



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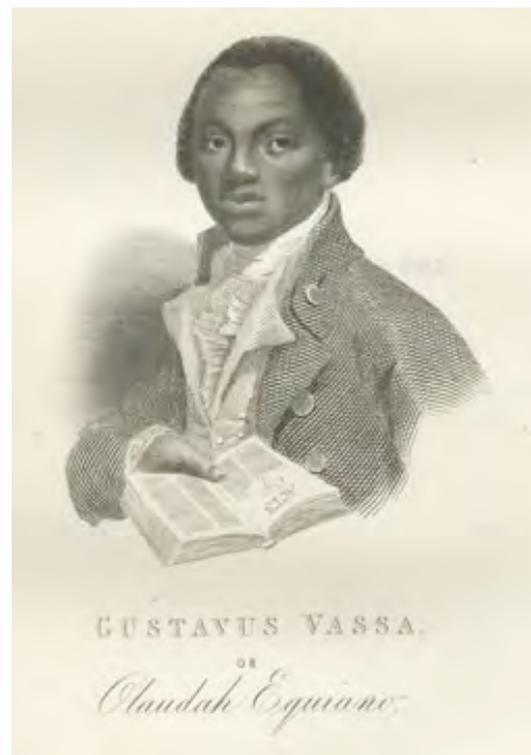
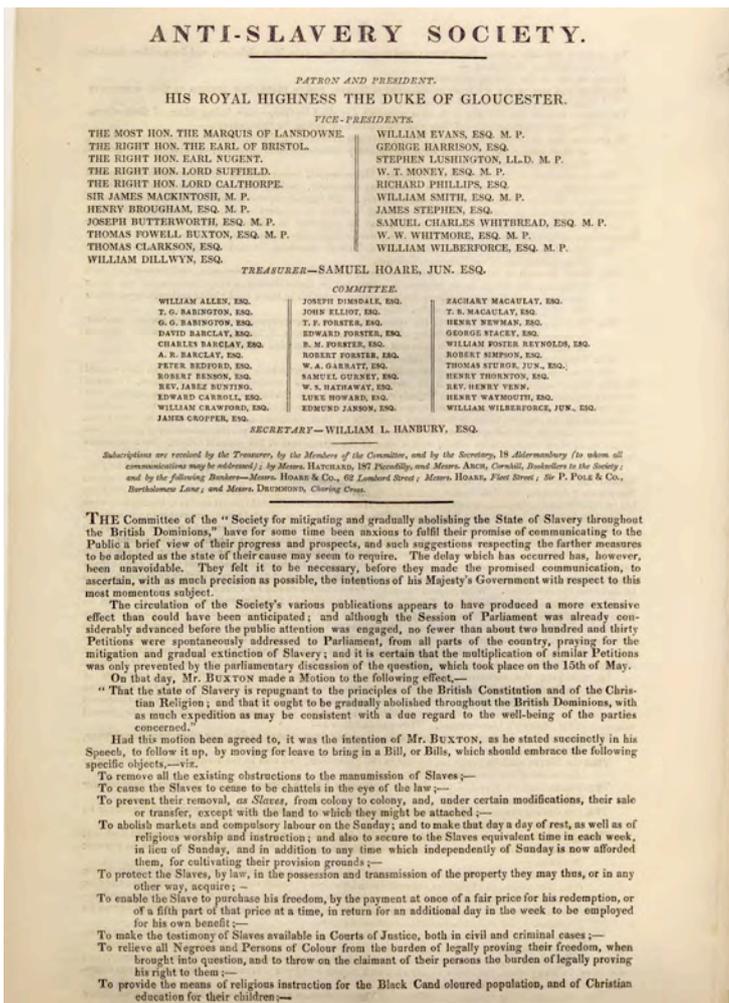
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An apprenticeship system was put in its place on the plantations - but this proved to be little better than slavery and was abolished in 1838. The plantation owners received compensation for losing their slaves – but the enslaved people received nothing.

America

In 1783, following the American War of Independence (1775-83), Britain lost its American colonies. This put a stop to Scotland’s lucrative tobacco trade – and several tobacco merchants went bankrupt. Scotland continued to trade with British colonies in the Caribbean. Slavery existed in America until 1867.



Oludah Equiano, abolitionist (c1745-97). His book about his experiences as a slave shocked British people. He gave lectures in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen in the early 1790s. Glasgow City Archives and Special Collections

Anti Slavery Society pamphlet Glasgow City Archives and Special Collections



1.9 A List of Slaves

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----|
| 1 | Charles | Driver | Elderly Impaird | 80 |
| 2 | Diamond | do | Elderly | 100 |
| 3 | Kwango | do | Young & healthy | 150 |
| 4 | Johnny | do | Elderly but do | 110 |
| 5 | Tom. Black of Copper Smith | | Elderly | 100 |
| 6 | Tell | Carpenter | Elderly | 90 |
| 7 | Diego | do | Elderly | 80 |
| 8 | Gibson | do | young & able | 140 |
| 9 | Billy | do | do do | 120 |
| 10 | Ned | Cooper | do do | 160 |
| 11 | Archie | do | do do | 160 |
| 12 | Laurie Mallate | do | Impaird | 70 |
| 13 | Scotland | do | able | 110 |

List of Enslaved Men – detail
Glasgow City Archives and Special Collections

From a list of male slaves on a Jamaican/Scottish plantation

Occupations:

Doctor 1

Cook 1

Driver 4

Carpenter 4

Sawer 2

Cartman 4

Cooper 4

Copper smith 1

Cattleman 2

Stableman 1

Boiler 3

Field (20 plus)



Value of enslaved people - examples:

Doctor – infirm £60
 Cook (male) – 'able but elderly' £80
 Driver – elderly, infirm £100 and £80
 Sawyer – elderly £70, young £100
 Carpenters – young, able £120 and £140
 Coopers – young, able £160
 Cattleman – 'able but runaway' £50
 Copper smith – elderly £100
 Field – able £80 – £100, 'swelled feet' £40

Some of the men's names:

Charles, Johny, Mungo, Big George, Daniel, Jack
 Scotland, Kingston, Edinburgh, London
 Thomson, Monmouth, Chatham, Binn
 Cato, Sampson, Scipio
 Mindo, Jupiter

There is no definition of 'elderly' or 'infirm'. 'Infirm' could mean not able to do the tough work in the fields or sugar mills. This list is an extract from an Inventory – the owner had died – these men were listed as part of the estate.



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2.0 Dilemmas

Anti-slave trade medallion
SCRAN (© British Museum, London)



Dilemmas

This section looks at some issues surrounding the slave trade and slavery. These are for discussion work though, of course, further work can come from them.

10 years upwards

- When Zachary Macaulay went to Jamaica, aged 16, he joined the slave trade system. He wrote that, at first, he was shocked at the plight of the enslaved people - but then became 'callous and indifferent'. He worked as an assistant manager on a plantation and wrote home that '...no sooner than a person sets foot on (this island) than his former ways of thinking are entirely changed...' Eventually, Macaulay returned to Britain – where he campaigned against the slave trade. What would you have done if you had gone to Jamaica in those days?
- Peer pressure – doing something you don't agree with to 'keep in' with those around you. Is there any time when you feel you have done this? Consider the names given to people who speak out. When is it good to speak out and when is it simply 'telling tales'?
- Why do some people want to control others? Why do some people 'stand on' others to make themselves feel taller? Some say: the bullied one is the weak one (and therefore deserves to be bullied) - is this true?
- Should we use different words when describing the Slave Trade? For instance, enslaved people rather than slaves? If so, why do you think this?

Older students

- The Transatlantic Slave Trade, with its demeaning words and images has created and perpetuated racism against black people and, in particular, those of African descent. Is this true?
- Is the Transatlantic Slave Trade - with the many millions of Africans who died or were displaced - like the Jewish Holocaust?
- Should we drop the term 'slave trade' (implying a normal trade) and use Maafa (from a Kiswahili word: disaster, tragedy)?
- Consider Wedgwood's medallion of a kneeling African, with the inscription 'Am I not a man and a brother?' Some people think it is sympathetic – but others think it is patronising. What do you think?
- There is also a Wedgwood medallion depicting a woman. Thousands of women and girls were enslaved. And many British women campaigned against slavery – though they could not vote. (It has been suggested that the women's Suffrage movement in Britain stemmed from the Abolition movement – women learnt how to use action groups). Do you think women – enslaved women and campaigners - are represented fairly in accounts of the Slave Trade?



- Consider the African Diaspora, caused by the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and what effect the depopulation had on the West African countries. Consider the dynamic effect the Diaspora has had on European and American culture (for instance, language, art, music and politics). Would you say, from a modern perspective, there were any good outcomes from the Slave Trade?
- In 1787, Robert Burns planned to go to Jamaica to become a 'negro driver' (see Resources/Books – Letter to Dr. John Moore – and The Slave's Lament). Instead he became a famous poet. But, what if his poems had not been published? What if he had gone to Jamaica as an unknown, impoverished, young man? Would he have joined the slave trade system or not?



Robert Burns (1759-96)

Image courtesy of Burns Monument Trust

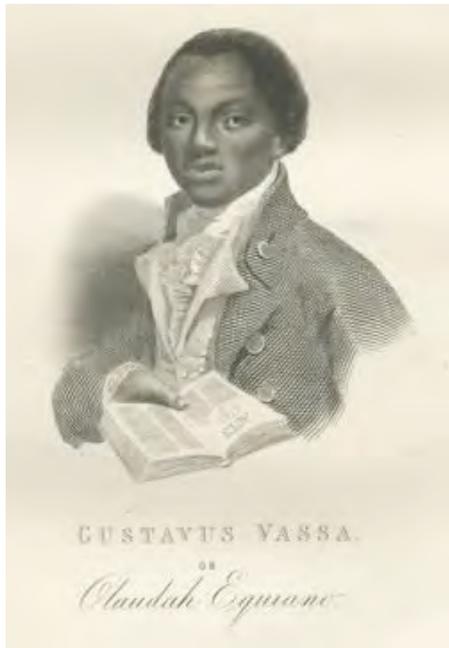


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3.0 Resources

Olaudah Equiano
Glasgow City Archives and Special Collections



3.1 Books

The Slave Trade

African writers, 1700/1800s

Ottobah Cuguano; Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of Slavery..; 1787; reprinted 1969

Oludah Equiano; The Interesting Narrative..; 1789; reprints 1988; 2006

King, Sandhu, Walvin, Girdham; Ignatius Sancho, An African Man of Letters; 1997

Harriet Jacobs; Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl; 1862

Scotland

Iain Whyte; Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery 1756-1838; 2006

Geoff Palmer; The Enlightenment Abolished; 2007

Britain

James Walvin; The Trader, the Owner, the Slave: Parallel Lives; 2007

James Walvin; A Short History of Slavery; 2007

Hugh Thomas; History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440 -1870; 2006

Simon Schama; Rough Crossing; 2005

Painting, Poetry, Letters

J.M.W. Turner (1775 – 1851)

Painting (oil on canvas)

Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying - Typhoon Coming On ('The Slave Ship'); exhibited 1840

Henry Lillie Pierce Fund; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

www.tate.org.uk/collection/ (Go to: Search the Collection:Turner/Slavers Throwing Overboard...)

Robert Burns

Complete Poems (many different editions)

The Slave's Lament; written 1792

Letters (different editions)

www.rbwf.org.uk (Poems and Songs, Letters of Burns)



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3.2 Websites

Scotland and the Slave Trade

Scottish Executive On-line book www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/03/23121622/0

Scottish Archive Network On-line exhibition www.scan.org.uk/exhibitions

Scottish Archives Documents on the slave trade www.nas.gov.uk

The British Slave Trade

Open University www.open2.net/slavery

The Port Cities (Bristol, Liverpool, London, Hartlepool, Southampton) Bristol has lots of information on the people involved, goods, prices, etc. www.portcities.org.uk

Churches and Abolition

Action of Churches Together – Scotland, England www.scotlandandslavery.org.uk www.setallfree.net.uk





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Wendy McMurdo www.wendymcmurdo.com

Shawlands Primary School © Alistair Devine
Alistair Devine Photography alastairdevine@bigfoot.com

David Livingstone Memorial Primary School © Sandra Cushnie

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