

# The Atlantic Slave Trade

## Big Idea

European expansion affected Africa with the dramatic increase of the slave trade. As you read, use a table like the one below to identify economic and political factors that caused the slave trade to be profitable. List the economic and political effects of the trade.

Economic/Political Factors	Economic/Political Effects



## Read to Learn

### Trade, Colonies, and Mercantilism (page 438)

#### Drawing Conclusions

*What were two reasons for the high demand for enslaved people?*

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European nations established many trading posts and colonies in the Americas and in the East. A **colony** is a settlement of people living in a new territory, linked by trade and government control with the parent country. **Mercantilism** was a set of economic principles. Mercantilists thought that the prosperity of a nation depended on having a large amount of gold or silver. To achieve this, countries tried to have a favorable **balance of trade**. This is the difference between what a nation imports and what it exports. Exports brought in gold or silver, so governments stimulated new industries with **subsidies**, or payments.

Sugarcane **plantations**, or large agricultural estates, were set up in Brazil and the Caribbean islands. Enslaved persons were taken from Africa, becoming part of the **triangular trade**. European merchant ships carried European manufactured goods to Africa, where they were traded for enslaved people, who were shipped to the Americas and sold. This part was called the **Middle Passage**. The Europeans then bought tobacco, molasses, sugar, and raw cotton in the Americas and shipped them back to Europe.

In the eighteenth century, 6 million enslaved Africans were exported. There was a very high death rate. Many died on the journey, and many more died of diseases to which they had no immunity when they arrived.



# Read to Learn

## Effects of the Slave Trade (page 441)

### Analyzing Information

*What group of Europeans began the condemnation of slavery?*

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The slave trade was a tragedy for its victims. In addition, it led to the depopulation of some areas, and it deprived many African communities of their youngest and strongest men and women. It led to increased warfare in Africa. Coastal or near-coastal African chiefs, armed with guns acquired from the slave trade, increased their raids and wars on neighboring peoples. Very few Europeans cared.

The slave trade had a devastating effect on some African states. Benin in West Africa, for example, was a brilliant and creative society until it was pulled into the slave trade. As population declined and warfare increased, the people of Benin lost faith in their gods, their art deteriorated, and human sacrifice became more common. It became a corrupt and brutal place. It took years to discover the brilliance of the earlier culture.

The use of enslaved Africans remained largely acceptable to European society. Europeans continued to view Africans as inferior beings fit chiefly for slave labor. Not until the Society of Friends, or Quakers, began to condemn slavery in the 1770s did European feelings against it begin to build. The French did not abolish slavery until the French Revolution in the 1790s. The British ended the slave trade in 1807 and abolished slavery throughout the empire in 1833. But slavery continued in the United States until the Civil War of the 1860s.

