

Comparing Slave Trades: A Study of the Transatlantic and Trans-Saharan Slave Trades

Overview

This lesson is intended as a short overview of the transatlantic and trans-Saharan slave trades. Students will begin the lesson by brainstorming the word “slavery.” After a brief discussion, student led groups will examine either the transatlantic or trans-Saharan slave trade. The students will then teach their group mates in a concise and creative manor about their assigned topic. The lesson culminates with the class completing a graphic organizer comparing the transatlantic and trans-Saharan trades. For more lessons regarding the slave trade, visit the Consortium’s database at civics.org.

NC Essential Standards for World History

- WH.5.1 - Explain how and why the motivations for exploration and conquest resulted in increased global interactions, differing patterns of trade, colonization, and conflict among nations
- WH.5.3 - Analyze colonization in terms of the desire for access to resources and markets as well as the consequences on indigenous cultures, population, and environment

Materials

- Slavery Brainstorming Web (attached)
- “Comparing the African Slave Trade in the East and West” handout (attached)
- “Overview of the Transatlantic Slave Trade” handout (attached)
- “Overview of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade” handout (attached)
- Venn Diagram (attached)
- Pens, Pencils, Markers
- Computer paper

Essential Questions:

- What is slavery?
- What is the transatlantic slave trade?
- What is the trans-Saharan slave trade?
- What are the major differences between the two trades?
- What are the major similarities between the two trades?

Duration

One 60 minute class period

Student Preparation

It is helpful, although not necessary, for students to have prior knowledge concerning European and Muslim exploration and expansion.

Procedure

Warm Up: Slavery Brainstorm

1. Draw a “SLAVERY” brainstorming web on the blackboard or project a transparency of the attached web onto the board as students walk into class. Instruct students to copy the web on a

blank piece of paper and then allow a few minutes to individually brainstorm words associated with “slavery.”

2. Once students have finished brainstorming, instruct them pair up with their neighbors to compare answers. While comparing answers, have student pairs ponder the following questions:
 - What answers do we have in common? Why do you associate these common words with the topic of slavery?
 - What answer do we have are different? Why do you associate these different words with slavery?
3. Invite a few student pairs to share their common answers; have them record their answers on the web at the front of the class. Once the web is completed, engage the students in a discussion regarding slavery. Ask the students that shared their responses to explain why they associate their word with slavery. Allow students to ask questions regarding their classmates’ responses. Pose the following questions to spark a class discussion:
 - What is the definition of slavery?
 - *Slavery is a social-economic system under which certain persons known as slaves are deprived of personal freedom and compelled to perform labor or services.*
 - What countries or regions of the world do you associate with the word “slavery?”
 - *Students probably have some knowledge of the transatlantic slave trade between Europe, the Americas, and Africa.*

Use student responses to foster further discussion and to gauge prior knowledge.

4. Explain to students that they are going to be learning about the African slave trade. Clarify that although slavery has existed internally in Africa for thousands of years in different forms, today they will focus on comparing two external African slave trades: the transatlantic and the “trans-Saharan” slave trades. Most people are familiar with the transatlantic slave trade; a great deal of research has been done about the topic. (If the brainstorming answers reflect ideas that are strictly associated with the transatlantic slave trade, the “Middle Passage” for example, point out this fact to the class.) Little research has been done regarding the trans-Saharan slave trade; therefore, many people are not familiar with the trade in the East. It is going to be their job to research and compare both trades within their assigned group.

Comparing the Trades

5. Divide students into groups of four with two pairs in each group. Distribute the attached “Overview of the Transatlantic Slave Trade” to one pair and the attached “Overview of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade” to the other pair. Explain to students that each pair is going to become an expert in their assigned field and then use their expertise to teach their group about the topic.
6. After grouping the students pass out and review the attached “Comparing the African Slave Trade in the East and West” handout. Go over the following information contained on the handout and inform students that they will receive their “Venn Diagram” handouts once both pairs have presented:
 - Directions: The purpose of this assignment is to research either the Transatlantic Slave Trade or the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade and to teach my group mates what I have learned.

- Step 1: Silently read my assigned handout while thinking about the following questions:
 - Who were the countries or nations involved in my assigned slave trade? Who capture the slaves?
 - What happened during my assigned slave trade? What were the slaves used for?
 - When did my assigned slave trade occur?
 - Where did my assigned slave trade take place? Where did the captured slaves go?
 - Why did my assigned slave trade take place?
 - What facts did I find most interesting?
 - What additional facts do I think are important?
- Step 2: Compare my answers with my partner’s answers and try to determine:
 - What are the best answers to the above questions?
 - How can we effectively and creatively present what we have learned? Must include both a written piece and a visual piece. Suggestions for presenting material:
 - Lecture format
 - Draw a cartoon/picture
 - Write a short story
 - Create a poster
 - For example: You may choose to write a short lecture and then draw a picture that illustrates a part of your lecture.
 - Be sure that whatever you choose, it answers the questions above.
- Step 3: Present my information to my group mates:
 - Be sure they are paying attention and taking notes during your presentation
 - Allow your group mates to ask you and your partner questions once you have finished the presentation.
- Step 4: Once both groups have presented, fill out the Venn Diagram sheet comparing both slave trades.
- Step 5: Turn in your presentations at the end of class.

7. Allow students five to ten minutes to silently read over their assigned information sheets. Indicate to students when their silent reading time is up and then instruct them to discuss the questions with their partners. Students should have about twenty minutes or thirty minutes to collaborate with their partners and create a presentation. Remind them that the presentations should be about five minutes each. Circulate throughout the room to ensure students are on task and to answer any questions that may arise.
8. Once each pair has finished presenting, give them a copy of the “Venn Diagram” sheet and instruct the entire group to fill it out together.

Debriefing the Slave Trades

9. Draw a large Venn diagram on the board and as groups finish, instruct them to add one fact to the large diagram. Once all the groups have finished and have placed at least one fact on the large diagram, review and discuss the diagram. Add any information that the students may have missed.
10. Use the following questions to debrief the lesson:
 - Name one thing you learned about the slave trade?

- What was the main reason for the start of the transatlantic slave trade?
 - *Need for labor on New World plantations*
- Summarize the “triangle trade.”
 - *Slaves went from Africa to New World. Raw materials from New World went to Europe. Finished goods from Europe went to Africa.*
- What was the journey across the Atlantic Ocean called?
 - *Middle Passage*
- Name one destination of the slaves sent to the New World.
 - *Caribbean Islands (Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, etc.); the United States; Brazil.*
- Approximately how many slaves were involved in the transatlantic slave trade?
 - *9 – 12 million*
- What was the main reason for the start of the trans-Saharan or Islamic slave trade?
 - *Having slaves was seen as a sign of wealth and prestige.*
- Name one way slaves were obtained during the trans-Saharan slave trade.
 - *Conquest, tribute, offspring, purchase*
- What were most of the slaves used for?
 - *Domestic purposes*
- How many slaves were involved in the trans-Saharan trade?
 - *Approximately 11 – 14 million.*
- Why do you think it is important to study the slave trade?
- What do you think were the effects of the slave trade on Africa? The United States? The Middle East?
- Why do you think that slavery is outlawed today?

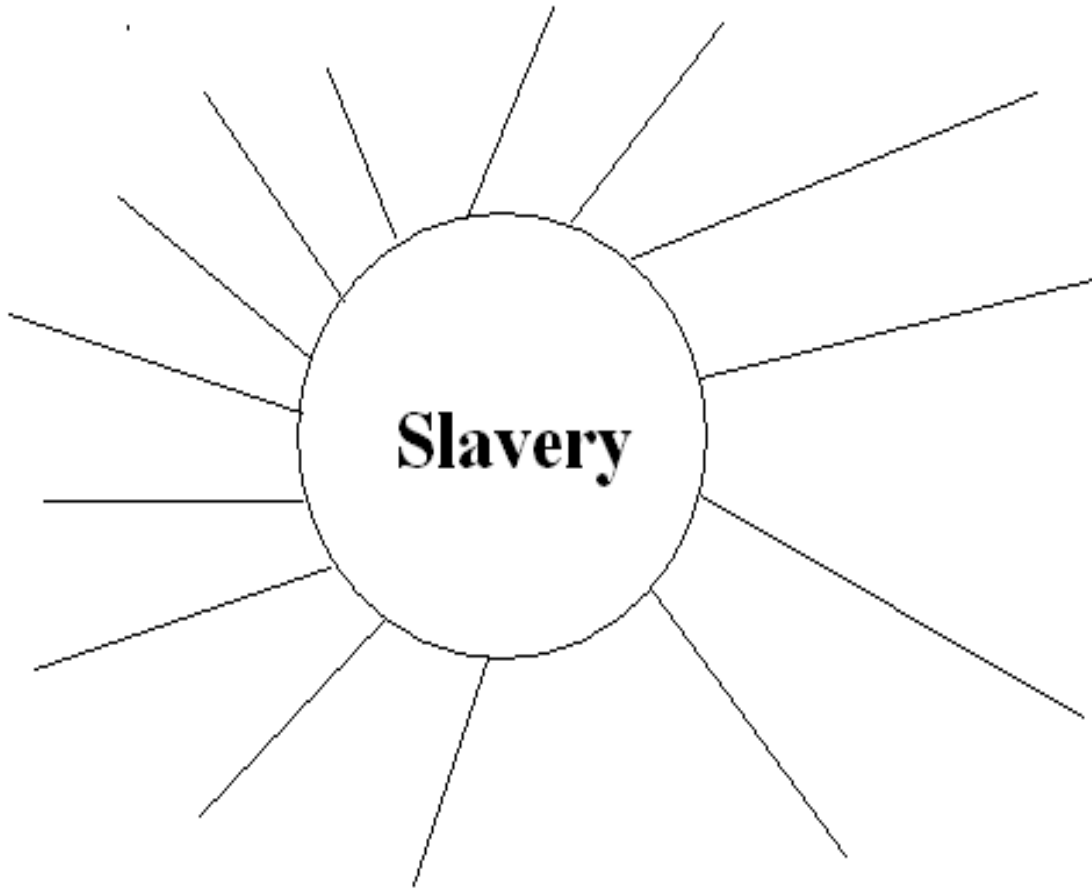
Resources

- BBC News:
 - “Focus on the Slave Trade”
 - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1523100.stm>
 - “Slavery in Islam”
 - http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/slavery_1.shtml
 - “Quick Guide: The Slave Trade”
 - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6445941.stm>
- About.com
 - <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slavery/a/IslamRoleSlavery01.htm>
 - <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slavery/a/IslamRoleSlavery02.htm>
 - <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slavery/tp/TransAtlantic001.htm?p=1>

Additional Activities

- Have students research the “Middle Passage” and then write a song that reflects the experiences of slaves.
- Using the internet, have students research both the transatlantic and trans-Saharan trades and draw a map that shows the destination of captured slaves.
- Have students research modern day slavery and write a report detailing the various types, who’s involved, and what can be done to stop it.

Warm Up Web



Comparing the African Slave Trade in the East and West



Name _____
Class: _____

I have been assigned (circle one): **The Transatlantic Slave Trade** **the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade**

Directions: The purpose of this assignment is to research either the Transatlantic Slave Trade or the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade and to teach my group mates what I have learned.

Step 1: Silently read my assigned handout while thinking about the following questions:

- Who were the countries or nations involved in my assigned slave trade? Who capture the slaves?
- What happened during my assigned slave trade? What were the slaves used for?
- When did my assigned slave trade occur?
- Where did my assigned slave trade take place? Where did the captured slaves go?
- Why did my assigned slave trade take place?
- What facts did I find most interesting?
- What additional facts do I think are important?

Step 2: Compare my answers with my partner's answers and try to determine:

- What are the best answers to the above questions?
- How can we effectively and creatively present what we have learned? Must include both a written piece and a visual.
 - Suggestions for presenting material:
 - Lecture format
 - Draw a cartoon
 - Write a short story
 - Create a poster
 - For example: You may choose to write a short lecture and then draw a picture that illustrates a part of your lecture.
 - Be sure that whatever you choose, it answers the questions above.

Step 3: Present my information to my group mates:

- Be sure they are paying attention and taking notes about your presentation
- Allow your group mates to ask you and your partner questions once you have finished the presentation.

Step 4: Once both groups have presented, fill out the Venn diagram sheet comparing both slave trades.

Step 5: Turn in your presentations at the end of class.

Overview of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Europeans began to explore Africa in search of gold. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade began around the 1450's when Portuguese interests in Africa moved away from the fabled deposits of gold to a much more readily available commodity -- slaves. By the 1600's the trade was in full swing, reaching a peak towards the end of the 1700's. It was a trade which was especially fruitful, since every stage of the journey could be profitable for merchants -- the infamous triangular trade. (See map).

Why did the Trade Begin?

Expanding European empires in the New World lacked one major resource -- a work force. In most cases the indigenous peoples had proved unreliable (most of them were dying from diseases brought over from Europe), and Europeans were unsuited to the climate and suffered under tropical diseases. Africans, on the other hand, were excellent workers: they often had experience with agriculture and keeping cattle, they were used to a tropical climate, resistant to tropical diseases, and they could be "worked very hard" on plantations or in mines.

Was Slavery New to Africa?

Africans had been traded as slaves for centuries -- reaching Europe via the Islamic-run, trans-Saharan, trade routes. Slavery was also a traditional part of African society -- various states and kingdoms in Africa operated one or more of the following:

- **chattel slavery:** Chattel slaves are considered their masters' property — exchanged for things like goods or money and expected to perform labor.
- **debt bondage:** Using labor to pay off a debt to another person.
- **forced labor:** Forced labor is a practice of mandatory labor exacted by a state or by agencies of a state, other than as a punishment for a criminal offence.
- **serfdom:** Condition in which a tenant farmer was bound to a hereditary plot of land and to the will of his landlord.

What was the Triangular Trade?

All three stages of the Triangular Trade (named for the rough shape it makes on a map) proved lucrative for merchants.

The first stage of the Triangular Trade involved taking manufactured goods from Europe to Africa: cloth, spirit, tobacco, beads, cowrie shells, metal goods, and guns. The guns were used to help expand empires and obtain more slaves (until they were finally used against European colonizers). These goods were exchanged for African slaves.

The second stage of the Triangular Trade (the middle passage) involved shipping the slaves to the Americas.

The third, and final, stage of the Triangular Trade involved the return to Europe with the produce from the slave-labor plantations: cotton, sugar, tobacco, molasses and rum.

Origin of African Slaves Sold in the Triangular Trade

Slaves for the Trans-Atlantic slave trade were initially sourced in Senegambia and the Windward Coast. Around 1650 the trade moved to west-central Africa (the Kingdom of the Kongo and neighboring Angola).

The transport of slaves from Africa to the Americas forms the middle passage of the triangular trade.

Who Started the Triangular Trade?

For two hundred years, 1440-1640, Portugal had a monopoly on the export of slaves from Africa. It is notable that they were also the last European country to abolish the institution - although, like France, it still continued to work former slaves as contract laborers. It is estimated that during the 4 1/2 centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Portugal was responsible for transporting over 4.5 million Africans (roughly 40% of the total).



Cowrie Shells



How Did the Europeans Obtain the Slaves?

Between 1450 and the end of the nineteenth century, slaves were obtained from along the west coast of Africa with the full and active co-operation of African kings and merchants. (There were occasional military campaigns organized by Europeans to capture slaves, especially by the Portuguese in what is now Angola, but this accounts for only a small percentage of the total.)

Who Has the Worst Record for Trading Slaves?

During the 1700's, when the slave trade accounted for the transport of a staggering 6 million Africans, Britain was the worst transgressor - responsible for almost 2.5 million. This is a fact often forgotten by those who regularly cite Britain's prime role in the abolition of the slave trade.

Conditions for the Slaves

Slaves were introduced to new diseases and suffered from malnutrition long before they reached the new world. It is suggested that the majority of deaths on the voyage across the Atlantic - the middle passage - occurred during the first couple of weeks and were a result of malnutrition and disease encountered during the forced marches and subsequent interment at slave camps on the coast.

Survival Rate for the Middle Passage

Conditions on the slave ships were terrible, but the estimated death rate of around 13% is lower than the mortality rate for seamen, officers and passengers on the same voyages.

Arrival in the Americas

As a result of the slave trade, five times as many Africans arrived in the Americas than Europeans. Slaves were needed on plantations and for mines and the majority was shipped to Brazil, the Caribbean, and the Spanish Empire. Less than 5% traveled to the Northern American States formally held by the British.

Overall Number of Slaves Transported to the Americas

There is no exact count for the number of Africans transported to the Americas. Scholars estimate that between 9 and 12 million Africans were transported to the Americas. It should be noted that the ratio of male slaves to female slaves was 2 males for every 1 female.

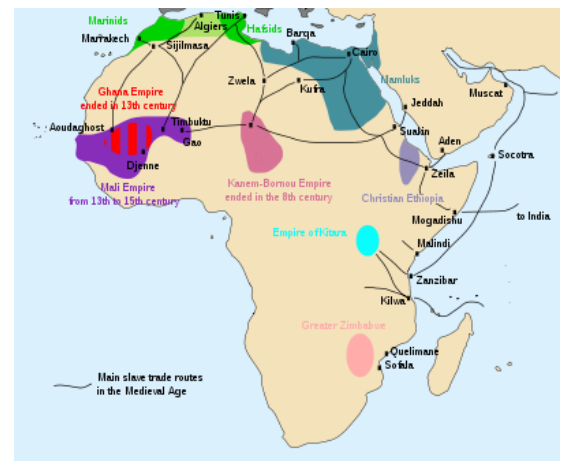
Source: <http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slavery/tp/TransAtlantic001.htm?p=1>
(Modified for brevity and content by the NC Civic Education Consortium)

Overview of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade

Slavery has been rife throughout all of ancient history. Most, if not all, ancient civilizations practiced this institution and it is described (and defended) in early writings of the Sumerians, Babylonians, and Egyptians. It was also practiced by early societies in Central America and Africa.

Why did the trade begin?

After Muhammad's (the founder of Islam) death in 632AD, his followers quickly spread out from Arabia across North Africa and into Europe. As the Islamic Empire expanded, many of its inhabitants became very wealthy. The Islamic trade began during the 700's. Like many ancient civilizations, slavery was not seen as evil, but as a part of social order; it was very prestigious to own slaves. As a result of the newfound wealth and the attitude towards slavery, the demand for slaves increased.



Map 1

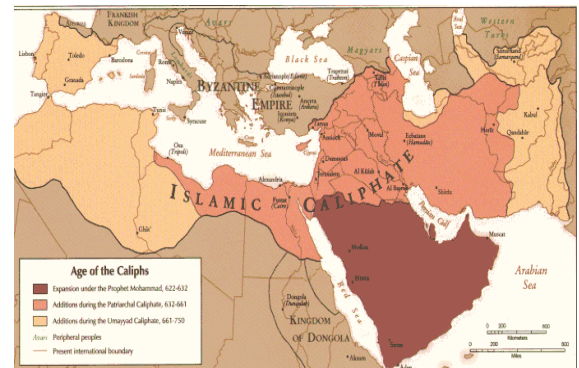
How were slaves obtained?

Slaves were obtained through:

- conquest
- tribute from weaker states: some states were required to provide hundreds of male and female slaves
- offspring: children of slaves were also slaves
- purchase: this provided the majority of slaves

Many African slaves were purchased at the borders of the Islamic Empire. This was done for several reasons:

1. The Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, prescribes a humanitarian approach to slavery:
 - free men could not be enslaved,
 - those faithful to foreign religions could live as protected persons, **dhimmis**, under Muslim rule (as long as they maintained payment of taxes).
 - People from outside the borders of the Islamic Empire were considered an acceptable source of slaves.
2. Eunuchs, or male slaves that were mutilated so they could not have children, were prized slaves. It was believed that they made the best bodyguards. However, Islamic law did not allow mutilation of slaves, so it was done before they crossed the border.



Map 2

The majority of these slaves were captured by other Africans in the interior and brought to the borders of the Islamic Empire to be sold in markets.

Black Africans were transported to the Islamic empire across the Sahara to Morocco and Tunisia from West Africa, from Chad to Libya, along the Nile from East Africa, and up the coast of East Africa to the Persian Gulf. This trade had been well going on for over 600 years before Europeans arrived, and had driven the rapid expansion of Islam across North Africa. (See Map #1)

How were slaves treated?

The law required owners to treat slaves well, provide medical treatment, and prohibited slave owners from taking young children from their mothers. Despite these protections, a slave had no right to be heard in court (testimony was forbidden by slaves), had no right to property, could marry only with permission of their owner, and was considered to be chattel – or an owner's property. Conversion to Islam did not automatically give a slave freedom nor did it give freedom to their children. While highly educated slaves and those in the military did win their freedom, those used for basic duties rarely achieved freedom.

What were the slaves used for?

Documentation suggests that slaves throughout Islamic world were mainly used for menial domestic and commercial purposes. Eunuchs were especially prized for bodyguards and confidential servants; women as concubines and menials. A Muslim slave owner was entitled by law to use slaves for mistresses. In fact, more women were enslaved than men; the ratio was two women enslaved for every man.

Records also show that thousands of slaves were used in gangs for agriculture and mining. Large landowners and rulers used thousands of such slaves, usually in poor conditions: It has been said, "of the Saharan salt mines [...] no slave lived there for more than five years."¹

The most favored of all Islamic slaves seems to have been the military slave. By the ninth century slave armies were in use across the whole of the Islamic Empire. The early slave armies tended to be white, taken from Russia and eastern Europe. However, the first independent Muslim ruler of Egypt relied on black slaves and at his death is said to have left 24,000 white and 45,000 black military slaves.

How long did the slave trade last?

The transatlantic slave trade between Europe, Africa, and the Americas sent Arab slavers into overdrive; here was a new market which could be exploited. When the Europeans abolished slavery in the 1800's, the taking of slaves in Africa continued. The eradication of continued trans-Saharan slavery was cited as a major justification by the Europeans for the colonization of Africa.

Unfortunately this was not enough for "some parts of Africa and much of the Islamic world retained slavery at the end of World War I. For this reason the League of Nations and later the United Nations took the final extinction of slavery to be one of their obligations. The League had considerable success in Africa, with the assistance of the colonial powers and by the late 1930's slavery was abolished in Liberia and Ethiopia". The problem was such that "After World War II the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights ... proclaimed the immorality and the illegality of slavery. Slavery was abolished in most Islamic countries, although it persisted in Saudi Arabia into the 1960's. It finally was made illegal in the Arabian Peninsula in 1962."

Overall Number of Slaves Transported to the East

There is no exact count for the number of Africans transported during the trans-Saharan trade. Scholars estimate that between 11 and 14 million Africans were transported out of Africa.

Sources:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/history/slavery_1.shtml

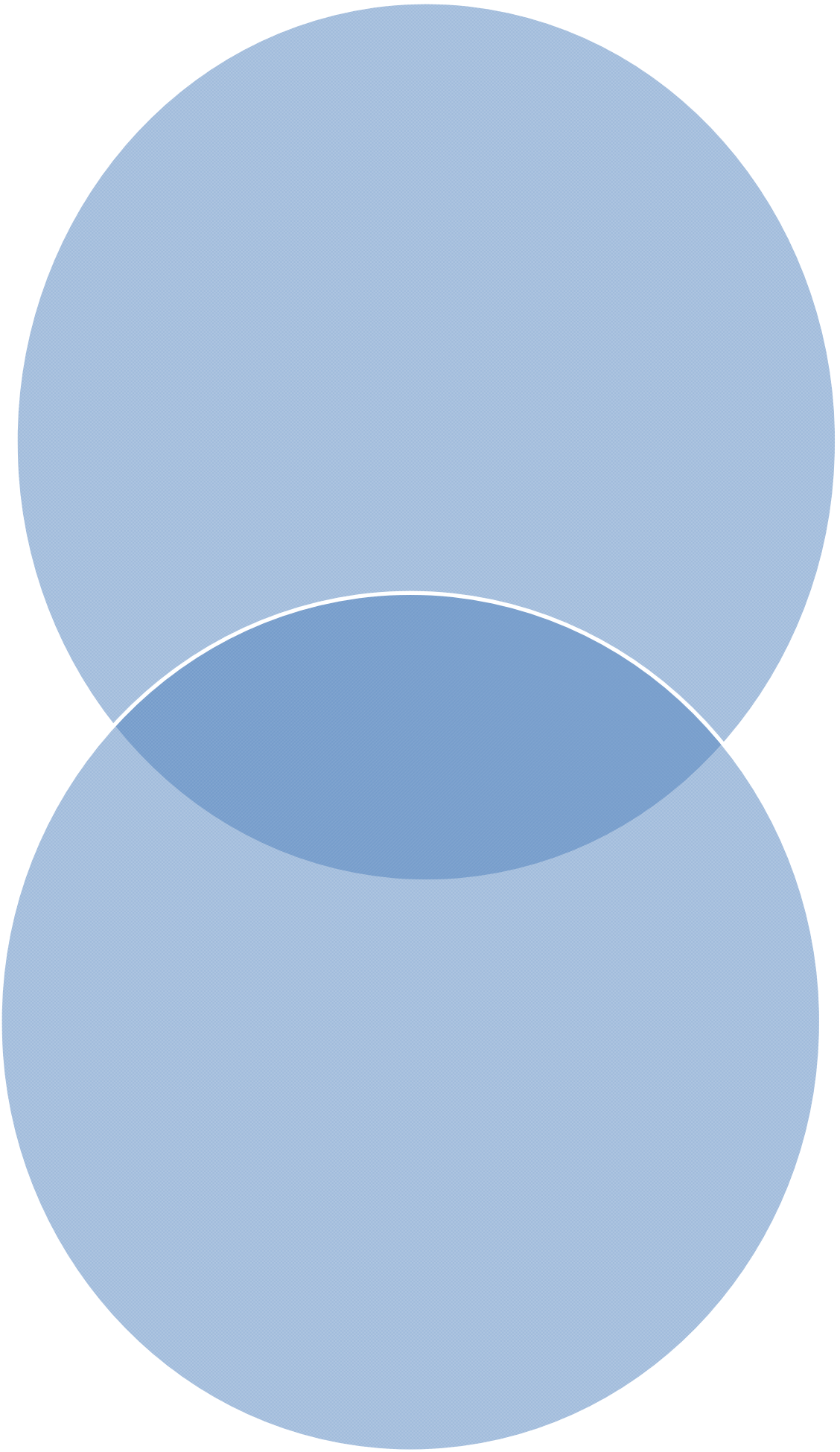
<http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slavery/a/IslamRoleSlavery01.htm>

<http://africanhistory.about.com/od/slavery/a/IslamRoleSlavery02.htm>

(Modified for brevity and content by the NC Civic Education Consortium)

Name _____

Comparing the Slave Trade Venn Diagram



Transatlantic Slave Trade

Trans-Saharan Slave Trade