



Section 3

European Conquest of Africa

Prepare to Read

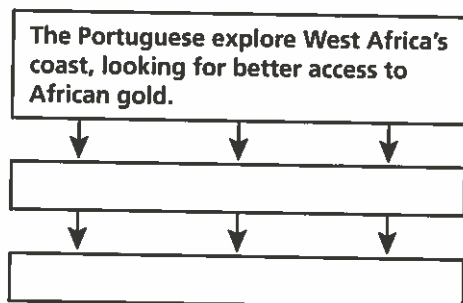
Objectives

In this section you will

1. Discover what motivated Europeans to explore the African coast.
2. Find out how the Atlantic slave trade developed in the 1500s.
3. Learn how Europeans colonized regions of Africa.

Taking Notes

As you read, find important details about the European conquest of Africa. Copy the flow-chart below, and use it to record your findings.



Target Reading Skill

Ask Questions Before you read this section, preview the headings and illustrations to see what the section is about. Write one question that will help you understand or remember something important in the section. For example, you could write this question: "Why did Europeans originally go to Africa?" Then read to answer your question.

Key Terms

- **Cape of Good Hope** (kayp uv good hohp) *n.* a former province of the Republic of South Africa; the point of land at the southern end of Cape Peninsula, South Africa
- **plantation** (plan TAY shun) *n.* a large farm where cash crops are grown
- **Olaudah Equiano** (oh LOW duh ek wee AHN oh) *n.* an antislavery activist who wrote an account of his enslavement
- **colonize** (KAHL uh nyz) *v.* to settle in an area and take control of its government



Many Africans stayed in cells like this one at Gorée.

On the island of Gorée (goh RAY), off the coast of the West African country of Senegal, stands a museum called the House of Slaves. It honors the millions of Africans who were enslaved and then shipped across the Atlantic Ocean. Many Africans passed through the building that now houses the museum. Their last view of Africa was an opening called "The Door of No Return." Beyond it lay the ocean and the slave ships bound for the Americas.

The Atlantic slave trade began in the 1500s and continued through the late 1800s. But contact between Europeans and Africans began long before that. In North Africa, Europeans traded for gold from the empires of Ghana and Mali. Why do you think Europeans' first contacts with Africans took place in North Africa?

Europeans on the Coast

After 1500, Europe's relationship with Africa changed. It had begun as trade between equals. But it turned into the enslavement and forced migration of millions of Africans. The African slave trade eventually ended in the 1800s. Afterward, Europeans became more interested in Africa's natural resources. By 1900, European countries had divided Africa among themselves.

Portuguese Exploration In the mid-1400s, the Portuguese began sailing along the West African coast in search of gold. For centuries, gold from West Africa had been transported across the Sahara to North African ports. It was then shipped across the Mediterranean to arrive at European markets. But the Portuguese and other Europeans wanted to trade directly for West African gold and ivory, instead of dealing with North African merchants. They also wanted to trade with Asia.

Many inventions helped the Portuguese explore Africa's coast. The Portuguese used a lateen sail, a triangle-shaped sail designed in North Africa. The lateen sail allowed ships to sail against the wind as well as with it. And better instruments, such as the astrolabe (AS troh layb), helped sailors navigate at sea. With these improvements, Portuguese sailors became the first Europeans to travel south along Africa's coasts.

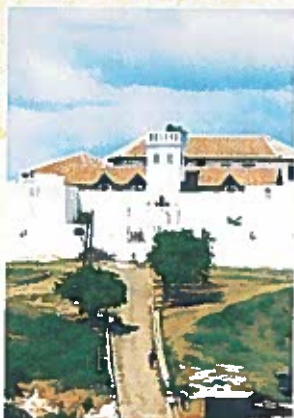
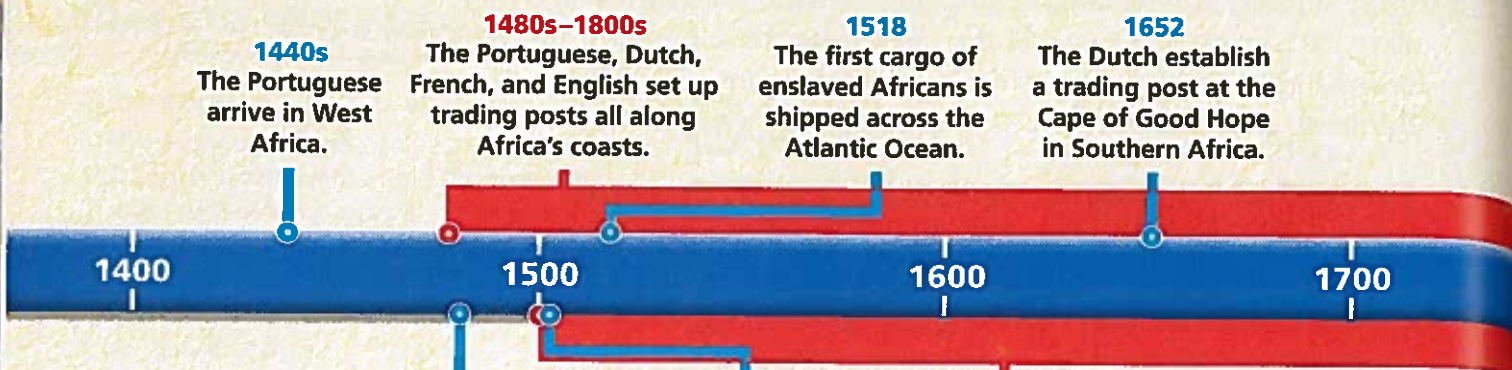
A Change in Trade Relations At first, Africans and Europeans traded with one another as equals. Africans traded gold, cotton, ivory, skins, metal objects, and pepper. In return, Europeans traded copper, brass, and clothing. Europeans also introduced corn, cassava, and yams from the Americas. These plants became food crops in Africa. Africans in turn introduced Europeans to okra, watermelon, and the best type of rice for growing in the Americas.

Over time, however, the trade relationship changed. In 1498, three Portuguese ships rounded the tip of Southern Africa and sailed north along Africa's east coast. The wealth of the East African city-states amazed the Portuguese. More Portuguese ships followed—not to trade but to seize the riches of the city-states. Portugal controlled the wealth of East Africa's coast until well into the 1600s.

Portuguese Ship, African Sails
This illustration shows a typical Portuguese sailing ship of the 1300s, called a caravel. It used lateen sails.
Synthesize How does this ship show that Europeans adopted elements of African culture?



Europeans in Africa



Trading post at Elmina

1482
The Portuguese build the first permanent European trading post in West Africa at Elmina, in present-day Ghana.

1505
The Portuguese found the first European settlement in East Africa at Sofala, in present-day Mozambique.

1500–1850
Europeans maintain trade of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic.



Life on a slave ship

European Trade Spreads The Dutch, French, and English soon followed the Portuguese. They set up trading posts along Africa's coasts, where sailors could get supplies. The Dutch built a trading post on the **Cape of Good Hope, a point of land at Africa's southern tip**. Soon, settlers arrived. They moved inland, building homes and farms.

As Europeans spread out, sometimes by force, their relations with Africans worsened. But it was the growing trade in enslaved Africans that poisoned future relations between Africans and Europeans the most.

✓ Reading Check What advantages allowed the Portuguese to be the first Europeans to trade directly with West Africans?

The Atlantic Slave Trade

Before the 1500s, slavery was common in some parts of Africa. There, enslaved people became the property of their owners and were forced to work for them. Slaves could win their freedom after a few years. Some became important citizens among the people who had enslaved them. Slaves could even be bought out of slavery by their own people.

Timeline Skills

Over the course of 500 years, Europeans had a strong influence on Africa.

Note When did Europeans establish their first trading post in Africa?

Identify Effects What were the effects of European trade interests on Africa?

1780s
The slave trade reaches its peak, with Europeans shipping 80,000 enslaved Africans per year out of Africa.

1914
By this time, the British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese have gained control of nearly all of Africa.

1800

1900

1884–1885
At the Berlin Conference, the European colonial powers define their regions of control in Africa.

European powers “carve up” Africa.

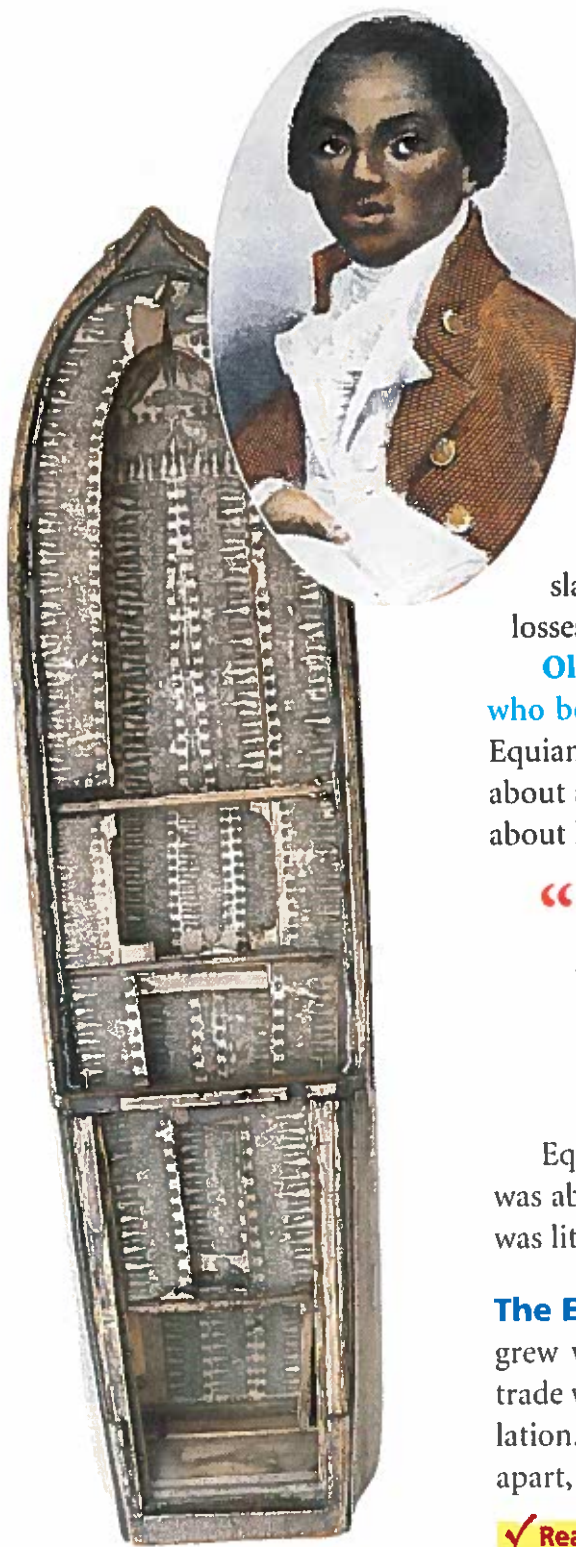


Then the European powers began to establish colonies in North, South, and Central America, as well as the Caribbean. The Europeans practiced a different type of slavery in the Americas. They treated the enslaved Africans as property that they shipped across the Atlantic to the Americas. The Europeans rarely freed their slaves. When the African slave trade ended in the mid-1800s, millions of Africans had been taken from their homelands, most never to return.

The Demand for Slaves European settlers in the Americas needed workers for their mines and plantations. **A plantation is a large farm where cash crops are grown.** Instead of paying plantation workers, the settlers preferred to use enslaved laborers. At first the settlers enslaved Native Americans. But many Native Americans became sick and died from diseases or brutal working conditions. Others ran away.

Therefore the European settlers decided to enslave Africans instead. The settlers knew Africans were skilled farmers, miners, and metal workers. They also thought Africans would easily adapt to the climate of the American tropics, which is similar to that of Africa. And since Africans would be in unfamiliar territory, they would not be able to escape easily.





The Slave Trade Begins By the 1600s, Portuguese traders were exchanging goods, such as guns, for African slaves. Some African nations refused to take part. But others sold people they captured during battles. By 1780, about 80,000 African slaves were being shipped across the Atlantic each year.

The Horrors of Slavery Captured Africans were often branded with hot irons to identify them as slaves. On the journey across the Atlantic, captives lay side by side on filthy shelves stacked from floor to ceiling. They received little food or water. As many as 20 percent of the slaves died during each crossing. To make up for these losses, ships' captains packed in even more people.

Olaudah Equiano (oh LOW duh ek wee AHN oh) was a slave who bought his own freedom and then fought against slavery. Equiano had been captured and sold at a slave auction in 1756, at about age 11. He felt sure he would die. In a book he later wrote about his experience, Equiano explained,

“[W]hen I looked around the ship and saw a large furnace of copper boiling and a multitude of black people of every description chained together . . . I no longer doubted of my fate.”

—The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, by Olaudah Equiano

Equiano proved luckier than most African slaves. In time, he was able to buy his freedom. For most enslaved people, freedom was little more than a distant dream.

The Effects of Slavery on Africa Some native Africans grew wealthy from the slave trade. Overall, however, the slave trade was a disaster for Africa. West Africa lost much of its population. Robbed of skilled workers, and with many families torn apart, many African societies broke down.

✓ Reading Check What fueled the European demand for slaves?

The Trials of Slavery

Olaudah Equiano (top right) was a slave who bought his own freedom. He traveled to America in cramped quarters on a slave ship similar to this model (above). **Analyze Images** Do you think it would have been bearable to live on a ship like this one?

Europeans Colonize Africa

In the mid-1800s, the African slave trade ended. Europeans then began to raid Africa's interior for its natural resources. They wanted the resources to run factories that were springing up all across Europe. They also viewed Africa as a place to build empires. Many Africans fiercely resisted European conquest. But their old guns proved no match for modern European weapons.