**The Atlantic Slave Trade, 1770-1807**

**Knowledge Review**

This booklet contains key points of knowledge from the curriculum.

It is arranged by topic as follows;

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You should use this booklet to support your revision. It is designed to accompany your own notes, not replace them.

This booklet gives key points of knowledge that can be used in answering the recall based questions, and will also contribute to the recall element of source based questions.

If there is any information contained in this booklet that you do not understand or that needs clarification, ask your teacher as early as possible.

Along with the key knowledge points, this booklet includes examples of recall based questions for you to practise.

In addition to revising these points of knowledge and practising recall based questions, it is also important to practise your skills in answering source based questions.

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| **Reasons for the Atlantic Slave Trade*** The demand for sugar was increasing in Britain as it became more affordable for the majority of the population, and was used to sweeten and preserve foods.
* The supply of spices and sugar to Britain from India and other areas to the east was interrupted by Turkish control of the Middle East.
* The Caribbean offered an alternative, with ideal growing conditions for sugar cane, but the plantations needed vast numbers of labourers.
* Native peoples soon died out through overwork and their lack of resistance to European diseases.
* European workers could not cope well with the hot climate.
* A suitable workforce was most easily acquired by enslaving Africans.
* Slavery was an ancient system and the Portuguese had established a modern slave trade which Britain became involved in.
* Racist ideas made the British public think it was acceptable to use Africans as slaves as they were perceived to be uneducated and barbaric.
* The Church was involved in slavery which made slavery look like a morally acceptable system.
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| **Structure of the Atlantic Slave Trade*** Western European countries developed the trade, with Britain, Holland and Portugal had the biggest input.
* The slave trade was structured on a series of credit transactions, this was known as the Triangular Trade.
* Goods were sent from Britain to Africa. These included guns, cloth, iron, gold coins, textiles, jewellery and sometimes alcohol.
* These goods were exchanged for captives, and the guns provided allowed Africans to force more of their own people into slavery.
* The slaves were then transported across the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean.
* The slaves were the most expensive and risky investment as the enslaved people would be vulnerable to death, disease, injury, escape and natural disasters.
* Ships would be insured, as would their cargo (including human cargo). Over 300 slave ships sank during the Atlantic Ocean crossing.
* The final stage of the Triangular Trade was the journey back to Britain from the Caribbean carrying the raw materials that had been produced such as sugar, coffee, cotton and tobacco. This would be processed in Britain for a great profit.
* 35,000 slave voyages occurred between 1600 and 1800, transporting approximately 12 million slaves.
* The entire cycle of the Triangular Trade could take over a year to complete, depending on the weather.
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| **Economics of the Atlantic Slave Trade*** Investment was required to become involved in slave trading. A ship had to be purchased or rented, and it would then need to be fitted to carry slaves. A crew and captain would need to be hired, and the provisions for the long journey obtained.
* Investments would not be returned immediately, as the triangular trade took a long time and the initial purchase of European goods would take up to a year to become the profits of processed raw materials.
* This meant slave traders needed long-term loans, and the first proper banking and schemes were created for the purpose of the slave trade. Often traders retired into the business of banking with their wealth. Lloyd’s Banking Group was set up at this time.
* Insurance was also a necessary expense. Ships and their cargoes were insured against loss, which protected the investments of the wealthy traders.
* It could be a lucrative business, with some voyages making between 20-50% profit.
* In 1803, the slave ship *Enterprise* made a profit of £26,272 (equal to £2 million today). It was a 9 month voyage carrying silk and brandy, 400 slaves and bringing back £3,800 of sugar to Britain.
* Thomas Leyland, a slaver trader from Liverpool, made a £736,000 fortune from slavery, transporting 25,000 Africans to the Caribbean. He was a well-respected businessman and became Mayor of Liverpool.
* Many traders, planters and merchants used the money they had acquired through slavery to become involved in politics, or to invest in factories and banking.
* Other industries made profits by supplying slave ships. Each year companies in Manchester sold £200,000 of goods for use in the slave trade. 100,000 guns manufactured in Birmingham were sold to slave traders.
* Profits could differ depending on how a slave ship was packed
* Loose packed = few slaves, but the individuals would be healthier and sell for more. A healthy slave could sell for £20-£50, making great profit.
* Tight packed = more slaves carried by one ship but the chance of them dying would be greater.
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| **Impact on British Ports*** During the course of the Atlantic slave trade, 162,000 slave ships departed from London, 69,000 from Bristol and 719,000 from Liverpool.
* The trade provided British ports with jobs preparing slave ships and also processing the raw materials upon return.
* Initially (until 1698) London had been the only port in Britain allowed to trade in slaves. Later, as other ports became involved, London developed into the financial centre of the trade – providing banking and insurance.
* Bristol developed very close relationships with African ports, and their merchants were well trusted within the African communities.
* Money was spent on grand houses and the city flourished.
* Industries processing copper, glass and sugar grew up around Bristol.
* Liverpool built 40% of slave carrying vessels, and by the 1780s was Britain’s largest construction site for slave ships.
* Between 1700-1800 Liverpool’s population rose from 5000 to 78,000.
* Huge workforces were available in many British ports, as people flocked to these cities for work in slave related industry.
* Liverpool had a deep waterfront, making its docks easily accessible to large ships. This made loading and unloading ships more efficient, and slave traders preferred to use Liverpool for this reason.
* Council building were often funded by slave profits such as Liverpool City Hall and the current Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow.
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| **Impact on West Africa*** Many people did not know much about Africa and held many racist ideas about their way of life and believed the people to be primitive. In reality African society was sophisticated and well-developed.
* The Atlantic slave trade was focussed on the west coast of Africa.
* The slave trade was used by some African leaders as a means of ridding themselves of lawbreakers – as criminals were handed over to slave traders as punishment.
* Those Africans who could not pay their debts were also at risk of being sold into slavery.
* The slave trade encouraged conflict between African tribes, as prisoners-of-war could be sold as slaves. This created hatred and violence that remained long after the slave trade had ended.
* Slave merchants would pay African chiefs for entrance onto their land and rewarded their co-operation with goods such as guns. This allowed some chiefs, such as King Gezo of Dahomey to become extremely wealthy.
* Approximately 12 million Africans were enslaved and forcibly removed from their homeland.
* The African workforce suffered as a generation of healthy labourers were exported. The working male population was reduced by 20%.
* In particular famine was more common because of the lack of labour.
* 14% of slaves were children under 14, 56% were adult males and 30% were women.
* There were 2-3 times more men enslaved as women because men could do more heavy labouring on the plantations.
* Slave traders needed to transport slaves quickly from interior areas of Africa to the coast. As a result transport networks improved – although this did not benefit local people.
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| **Impact on the Caribbean*** The native Arawak and Carib people were either killed, worked to death, or caught European diseases which they were not immune to.
* The Caribbean was changed drastically as society became a hierarchy with the white ruling class at the top and the slaves at the bottom with no rights.
* In 1629 the black population only accounted for 3%. Due to the arrival of enslaved Africans that percentage rose to 90% by 1800.
* The Caribbean produced 90% of the European sugar requirements.
* Sugar was grown as a cash crop which meant that it was grown for profit rather than as a food source for the Caribbean population.
* Huge areas of land were cleared to transform Caribbean islands into ‘garden-like’ land to grow as many cash crops, like sugar and tobacco, as possible.
* Infrastructure improved in the Caribbean due to the slave trade. Produce had to be moved and so transportation links improved as new roads and railways were built.
* The competition between European powers (mainly Britain and France) for control of the Caribbean’s lucrative sugar trade caused several conflicts.
* Control of the island of Tobago changed hands 33 times between 1650 and 1815.
* In 1794 British forces seized Guadaloupe from the French, but only held it until December when the French regained control.
* In the 1790s the British fought to maintain slavery on the island of St Lucia, against the French who wished to free the slaves.
* After the abolition of slavery, the former slaves still worked on the plantations, but now for very low pay or in return for land to live on as the rent was so high.
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| **Slave Capture*** European slavers were working on behalf of private companies from Europe, not Governments. Slavers negotiated with local chiefs and often paid them to gain permission to trade on their territory
* Europeans were afraid of getting diseases and they were unfamiliar with the African land, so mainly relied on African middle man to capture slaves
* African middle men captured individuals and transported them to the coast to sell to traders. Traders would also trade directly with local chiefs to get slaves
* The Kingdom of Dahomey was a powerful African tribe and they are believed to have supplied up to 20% of all the slaves sent across the Atlantic
* The Dahomey tribe was already powerful but was able to become even more powerful through trading slaves
* The Atlantic slave trade would not have been successful and profitable without the cooperation of Africans
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| * Slaves were often captured many miles inland and forced to walk to the West Coast, chained together in a ‘coffle’.
* They were chained together, often with a heavy piece of wood, 5-6 ft long, with forked ends. The slave’s neck would be placed between the forked ends and an iron bolt passed through the ends trapping their neck.
* Thousands of Africans died on the slave march.

**Slave Factories*** Once at the coast, slaves were kept in military forts called factories, managed by a ‘factor’ or trader.
* Around 45% (820,000) of slaves died here, as conditions were very poor.
* Most died from diseases that were caught here such as malaria
* There were at least 30 slave factories along the west coast of Africa
* Bance Island was the location of a British slave factory owned by the London firm ‘Grant, Sargent and Oswald’ and sent off several ships a year to the Caribbean each containing up to 350 slaves.
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| **The Middle Passage*** The Middle Passage was the name given to the middle ‘leg’ of the triangular slave trade, where slaves were transported from Africa to the West Indies.
* A typical Atlantic crossing took between 3-6 weeks but some were known to have lasted up to 4 months
* Slaves were often branded with hot irons and chained.
* Their heads may have been shaved and often they were stripped naked
* Many Africans from the mainland had never seen the sea or a ship and were terrified
* Some thought they were seized by white people to be eaten
* Slaves were usually held below deck, but some were reported to have kept many on deck
* Slaves often had no more than 5 ft of headroom and often much less. Many were forced to lie in their own waste for days
* Slaves were made to dance on deck for exercise which was humiliating
* Some slaves committed suicide by throwing themselves in to the sea
* Disease was common because of the close living conditions; dysentery (severe diarrhoea), dropsy (fluid build up in the body; swelling and pain) and yellow fever (tropical disease affecting liver and kidneys) were the most common
* Rape and abuse of slave women was common
* Attempted rebellions were common – one historian has suggested there was at least one slave rebellion for every 8-10 journeys
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| **Auctions and seasoning*** Slaves could be sold aboard the ship or onshore at a public auction
* Sometimes a process of ‘seasoning’ took place. This prepared slaves for sale. They were washed and shaved, would also be rubbed with palm oil to disguise sores and wounds caused by tough conditions on board the ships; this made them look healthier
* Sometimes seasoning lasted for years: 5 million slaves died in seasoning camps, and up to 50% of imported slaves died within 7 years of seasoning but seasoned slaves could be sold for 52% higher in Jamaica than unseasoned slaves
* Often slaves who had been whipped had their scars covered by tar. Buyers did not wish to purchase disobedient, defiant slaves; and scars were evidence of this
* There were two main types of slave auction: a ‘slave scramble’ (a rush of buyers to grab the slave they wish to buy) and an auction where slaves were sold to the highest bidder
* Slaves who could not be sold were known as refuse slaves: they were sometimes left to die at the ports
* Slaves had to endure being poked and prodded; having their teeth checked; standing naked whilst they were examined
* They were humiliated and were stripped of their dignity
* They were often split up from their family
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| **Life and Work on Plantations*** There were different classes of slaves; trusted skilled slaves were at the top and slaves who worked in the fields at the bottom
* The slaves formed their own language which was a mix of English words and African words so they could communicate. This language was called Creole
* Terrible illness such as yaws (painful skin disease) and European diseases like measles and whooping cough caused many deaths
* Many women were forced to take their babies into the fields with them because no one could look after them
* There were also domestic slaves, who worked in the Slaver’s house and worked for however long their masters chose.
* Overseers were trusted slaves or paid white men who watched over the slaves and ensured they were productive.
* Slaves could work from 18 – 20 hours per day.
* At the age of 12, slave children were forced to work on the plantation.
* Field labourers worked from dawn until sunset. They dug, weeded, planted and manured the sugar canes. Men and women worked together in groups known as gangs.
* Overseers (also known as slave drivers) were trusted slaves or white men, who were paid to work on the plantation
* often gangs of child slaves were organised to do the weeding
* Slaves enjoyed making music and songs were important. They sang working songs in the fields and sang and played music at ceremonies and festivals.
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| **Discipline and Punishment*** Plantation owners were afraid of a full scale revolution like in Saint-Domingue.
* White plantations were afraid that their slaves would join the Maroons and try to seize control of the island.
* Since the black population of slaves outnumbered the population of white plantation owners, plantation owners knew it was possible that the slaves could revolt successfully.
* Examples of slave punishments (remember, punishments differed depending on the slave owner; white slavers would think up many different cruel punishments for their slaves, and there was no rule that you had to punish your slave in a certain way, the punishments below are examples!):
* Failing to harvest enough sugar cane 🡪 50 lashes of the whip
* Trying to run away from the plantation 🡪 chased by dogs and a toe cut off
* Visiting family members without permission 🡪 shackled or chained up
* Attempting to kill a white man 🡪 executed by hanging.
* General disobedience to masters 🡪 moved to a different plantation
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| **Slave Resistance*** Resistance took place onboard ships during the Middle Passage, as well as when the slaves were working on plantations
* Captives would take any opportunity to overpower the European crew and take control of the ship.
* There were two types of resistance: Passive resistance and Active assistance.
* Passive resistance included slaves keeping their identity by continuing customs, beliefs and habits from Africa. Plantation owners gave slaves new names, slaves could retain their original names among themselves
* Active resistance included slaves attempting to escape from the plantation, in the hope of finding lasting freedom. Slaves would also work slowly or badly, reducing the effectiveness of the plantation
* Some slaves ran away from plantations, others killed or maimed the plantation owners and their families before they ran
* If they managed to get away, some ex-slaves lived in the mountains. In Jamaica these groups were called ‘Maroons’
* Between 1791 and 1804 Saint-Domingue experienced the most successful slave revolt in history; the slaves successfully formed a new independent state called Haiti
* Slaves suspected of planning revolt were executed publicly (however, this was not very common as this resulted in an economic loss for plantation owners).
* Punishments were worsened to discourage slaves from running away or planning revolt; in Kingston, Jamaica, slaves were gathered at the harbour on a weekly basis for flogging
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| **Origins of Abolitionist Movement*** The Bishop of Chester, Dr Beilby Porteus, was appointed in 1776 and was a known abolitionist who felt sympathy for the harsh lifestyle of slaves.
* Porteus spoke at the Anniversary Sermon in front of 11 Bishops criticising the Church’s role in slavery.
* 1788 Porteus supported the Slave Trade Bill proposed by William Dolben which limited the number of slaves that could be transported on a single ship.
* The African Association founded in 1788 dedicated to exploring Africa. This association changed the perceptions that British people had about Africans being ‘barbaric and savage’
* Mungo Park educated Europeans on African culture and explained that they were human beings who had their own traditions. This benefitted the abolition of slavery as it helped highlight that African people had identities and were not just slaves.
* Quakers were a religious group who believed slavery violated the belief that everybody is equal in the eyes of God.
* George Fox, founder of Quakerism, released a letter of caution in 1657 to ‘Friends beyond the sea that have Black and Indian Slaves’ stating that no person has the right to own another.
* In 1761 the Quaker group banned any Quaker from owning a slave and this began the foundations of the abolitionist movement by speaking out against slavery.
* British and American Quaker organisations worked together on a common aim of having no involvement in the process of slavery.
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| **Abolitionist Arguments** * Humanitarian arguments stated that the conditions of the Middle Passage were so awful that no human should have to suffer it. Humanitarian arguments claimed that all who were involved in slavery were brutalised.
* Economic arguments claimed that new industries had emerged in Britain which meant that British cities no longer relied on the slave trade and could make money elsewhere due to the Industrial Revolution – Adam Smith created a theory stating that slave labour is the most inefficient way of working as workers will be more productive if they are being paid to work.
* Religious opinions changed towards slavery and identified that God stated that humans should be equal and slavery broke the rules of the Ten Commandments.
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| **Legal Cases*** The Jonathan Strong Case featured a young slave who had been beaten by his master. Granville Sharp and his brother cared for the man until he was better. The slave, Strong, was recaptured by his former master and put on a boat heading for the Caribbean. Strong managed to send a letter to Granville Sharpe who prevented the boat from leaving and declared that slavery was not right under English law. Jonathan Strong was set free and it was a minor legal victory against slavery.
* James Somerset was a slave who was captured and put on a boat to Jamaica as punishment for trying to run away. His ‘godparents’ came forward and since they used such titles this demonstrated that Somerset must be Christian and it was not right to enslave a Christian. Granville Sharpe took the case to court in 1772 and won a victory for the abolitionists as the judge declared Somerset as free. This victory identified that slaves were believed to be free when they reached England.
* The Zong case highlighted the awful nature of the slave trade and gained a lot of publicity for the cause which shocked the British public. The ship Zong carried a diseased group of slaves and crew. If the slaves died upon arrival at their destination, the ship-owners would not get paid. However, if the slaves died at sea the insurance company would pay £30 (£40,000 in today’s money) for each slave. 133 sick slaves were thrown overboard. The insurance company took the case to court as the ship owners claimed slaves should be treated like other cargo, the courts declared that slaves were human beings and should be treated better. The insurance company won their case against the Zong.
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| **Thomas Clarkson*** Thomas Clarkson wrote an essay at university about the lawfulness of making other people slaves. This encouraged him to consider slavery for the rest of his life and his essay was published in 1786 and gained a lot of attention.
* Thomas Clarkson was involved in establishing the Committee of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, They convinced MP William Wilberforce to take up the cause.
* Clarkson’s role was to gather evidence on the slave trade and he travelled the ports of Britain looking for eyewitnesses to testify against slavery.
* Clarkson travelled to France and unsuccessfully tried to get the French government to abolish slavery.
* The abolitionists continued to campaign and Clarkson wrote his book “History of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade” in 1808. He continued to protest for complete abolition until the bill was passed in 1833 freeing all slaves in the British Empire.
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| **Methods of the Abolitionists*** In 1791, 300,000 people took part in a sugar boycott which reduced sales of slave produced sugar by a 1/3 in some places and up to ½ in others. Indian, non-slave produced sugar, sales increased by 10 times as much.
* Josiah Wedgewood released a medallion in 1787 that became the abolition symbol, reading “am I not a man and a brother?” which was produced on pottery and jewellery.
* Meetings were held to promote the campaign that often featured key speakers such as John Newton and Olaudah Equiano.
* Petitions were sent to parliament, one petition stretched the entire length of the House of Commons floor.
* 20% of Manchester’s population signed a petition to abolish slavery.
* Personal accounts of slave’s experiences were published like “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano.” which gained a lot of publicity for the cause as it detailed the horrors suffered by slaves.
* Slave captains such as John Newton turned against the slave trade and publicised their experiences and spoke against slavery in parliament.
* Pamphlets were produced to detail the horrors of the middle passage and educate the public.
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| **William Wilberforce and Parliament*** William Wilberforce was a rich young MP with various influential contacts.
* Wilberforce was the figurehead of the abolitionist campaign and spoke against slavery in 1789 in parliament in attempt to abolish slavery.
* Wilberforce first presented the abolition bill in 1791 but it was rejected by 163 votes to 88.
* Wilberforce put a bill to abolish slavery through parliament every year between 1791 -1807 until it was passed.
* In 1804 the House of Commons passed the abolition bill but the House of Lords rejected it.
* In 1806 James Stephen got a bill passed which banned slave ships carrying slaves to French colonies. This stopped 2/3 of the slave trade and hit the profitability of it.
* The abolition bill was passed in 1807 with 283 in favour and only 16 against.
* The British Royal Navy created a ‘West Africa Squadron’ to patrol the Atlantic Ocean to try to stop the slave trade.
* Any ship caught carrying illegal slaves after abolition were fined £100 per slave.
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| **Defenders of the Slave Trade*** Defenders claimed that Britain would lose 60% of its trade if slavery was abolished.
* It was claimed that conditions on slave ships were no worse than other passenger ships, Robert Norris was a slave captain and was bribed to give evidence in support of slavery.
* Some MPs such as Evan Baillie owned 2000 slaves and Thomas Leyland stated that Liverpool couldn’t cope without slave business as tens of thousands of people processed raw materials produced by slaves.
* Liverpool MP General Gascoyne suggested abolition threatened 40,000 tonnes of shipping, 4000 mariners jobs and £2 of investment.
* The Government feared that slave merchants would demand compensation and the government could not afford this so MP’s rejected abolition.
* Planters claimed they had invested millions of pounds in their slave labour and therefore the slaves were their property and could not be taken from them.
* Economic arguments identified that British people did not want to pay extra for the goods that were manufactured by slaves if abolition went ahead.
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| **Delay in Abolition*** The French colony of St Domingue had a revolt and slaves took control to make the independent nation of Haiti after killing 4000 white people and burning 180 plantations.
* Britain feared that French slave resistance might spread to British colonies and planters feared rebellion by their slaves.
* France abolished slavery in 1795 and paid compensation to those who had lost business. The British government could not afford a similar policy.
* The War with France in 1793 meant that Britain spent £18 million on war and had to raise taxes to fund this. High taxation was placed on Tobacco, sugar and other imported goods to make up the £22 million budget deficit which meant abolishing slavery was not an option for the government.
* The British government delayed abolition for financial reasons to ensure they could maintain high taxes on tobacco, sugar and coffee,
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| **Reasons for Success of Abolitionist Campaign*** Changing economic interests meant that sugar was no longer as profitable as natural disasters often ruined crops.
* Sugar could now be produced cheaper and more efficiently in India and cotton became more profitable than sugar.
* The industrial revolution allowed other industries in Britain to flourish which meant the economy did not rely on the slave trade.
* Resistance was growing amongst slaves. The French revolution enforced ideas of liberty which inspired the end of slavery. Plantations became unproductive as slaves were unwilling to work.
* Parliamentary reform aided the end of slavery as the government eventually granted abolition when Lord Grenville became Prime Minister.
* The public supported abolition and politicians feared becoming unpopular and losing their seat in parliament if they did not support the end of slavery.
* The Church now promoted the end of slavery which greatly influenced the ideas of the public.
* Slavery was abolished in 1807 but slavery was not officially made illegal throughout the British Empire until 1834.
* Compensation of £20 million was paid to planters involved in the slave trade.
* 2/3 of those who supported slavery were removed from parliament in 1832.
* The act to abolish slavery meant the slaves were still ‘apprentices’ for 6 years after they were free. This scheme was removed in 1838.
* Naval patrols sailed the Atlantic Ocean looking for illegal slave ships and captains were fined £100 per slave they were caught carrying.
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