

# MERCANTILISM AND THE SLAVE TRADE



# THE SOUTH ATLANTIC SYSTEM

- Center was Brazil and the West Indies; Sugar was primary product
- Followed mercantilist principles giving plantations tools and equipment to grow sugar and the ships to move it to England
- Was run on the slave trade
  - 1520-1650- Dutch dominated
  - 1700-1800- British carried 2.5 million Africans of the 6.1 million that were carried to the Americas





# ENGLISH AND THE WEST INDIES

- Most English in the West Indies began as small scale farmers who exported tobacco and livestock
- After 1650 sugar transformed Barbados and the other islands into slave based economies
- By 1680 only 175 planters owned more than half of the island of Barbados and half of its more than 50000 slaves
- These ideas spread to Jamaica and then into the American colonies
- Adam Smith noted in *The Wealth of Nations* that sugar was the most profitable crop grown in America or Europe



**Trans-Atlantic imports by region  
1450-1900**

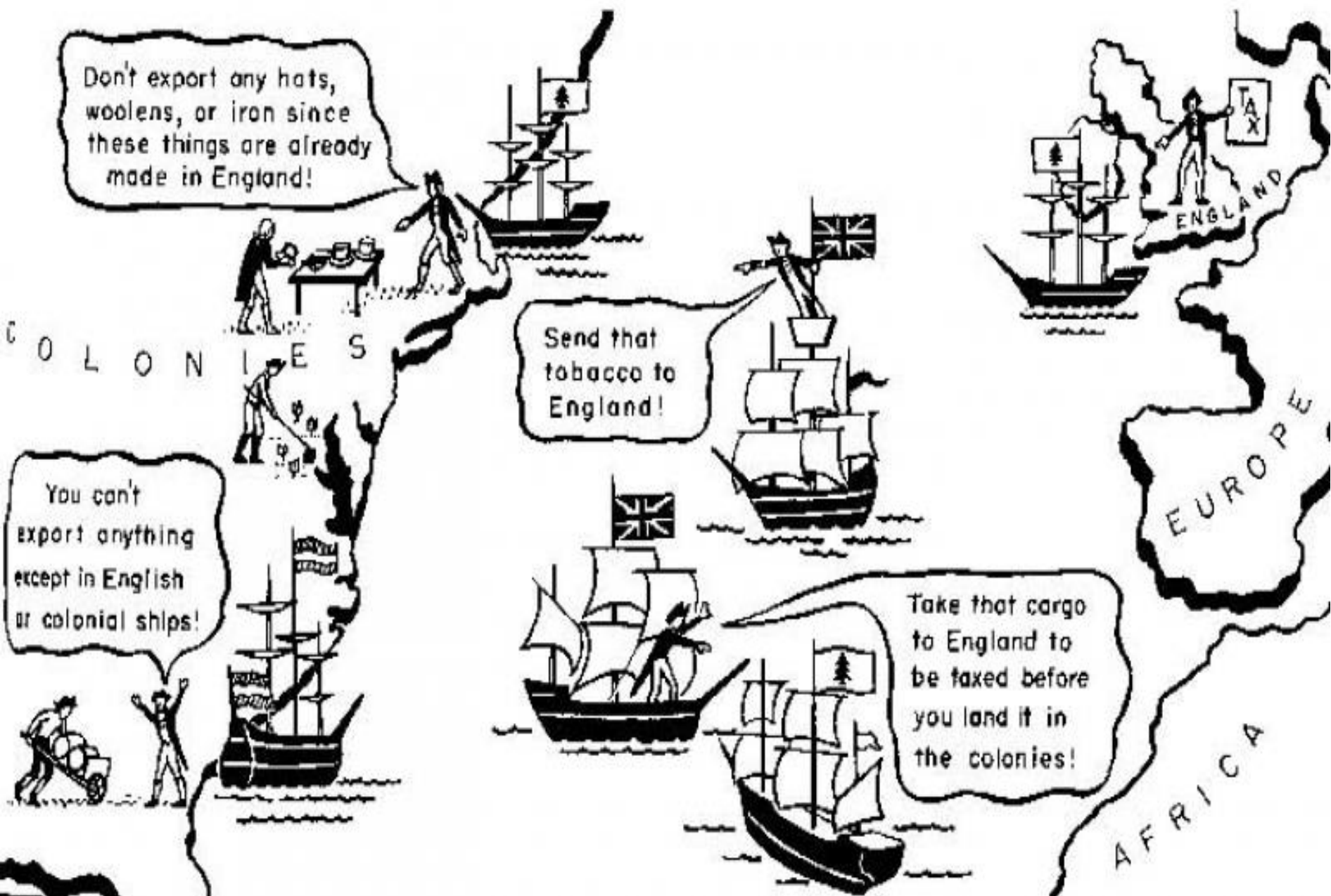
<b>Region</b>	<b>Number of slaves accounted for</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Brazil	4,000,000	35.4%
Spanish Empire	2,500,000	22.1%
British West Indies	2,000,000	17.7%
French West Indies	1,600,00	14.1%
British North America and U.S.	500,000	4.4%
Dutch West Indies	500,000	4.4%
Danish West Indies	28,000	0.2%
Europe (and Islands)	200,000	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,328,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>

# THE IMPACT ON BRITAIN

- Helped Europeans achieve world ECN leadership
- Powerful sugar lobby was formed in England
- Navigation Acts kept British sugar trade in the hands of the British merchants
- By 1750 American sugar and tobacco made up half of British exports
- Britain also made huge profits from the slave trade
- Slaves were traded for cloth, guns, iron and rum all less valuable than crops the slaves grew once in Americas
- 1790s- GB exported 300 thousand guns to Africa and a slave ship left an African port with 300-350 slaves every other day



# The Navigation Acts Enforced Mercantilism



# AFRICANS AND THE SLAVE TRADE

- Warfare and slaving part of African life for centuries
- Slaving was used to conquer states along the Gold Coast
- Benin prohibited the exportation of slaves both male and female
- 2/3 of slaves sent across the Atlantic were male; sexual imbalance in African led to polygamy
- Slavery in Africa increased as well

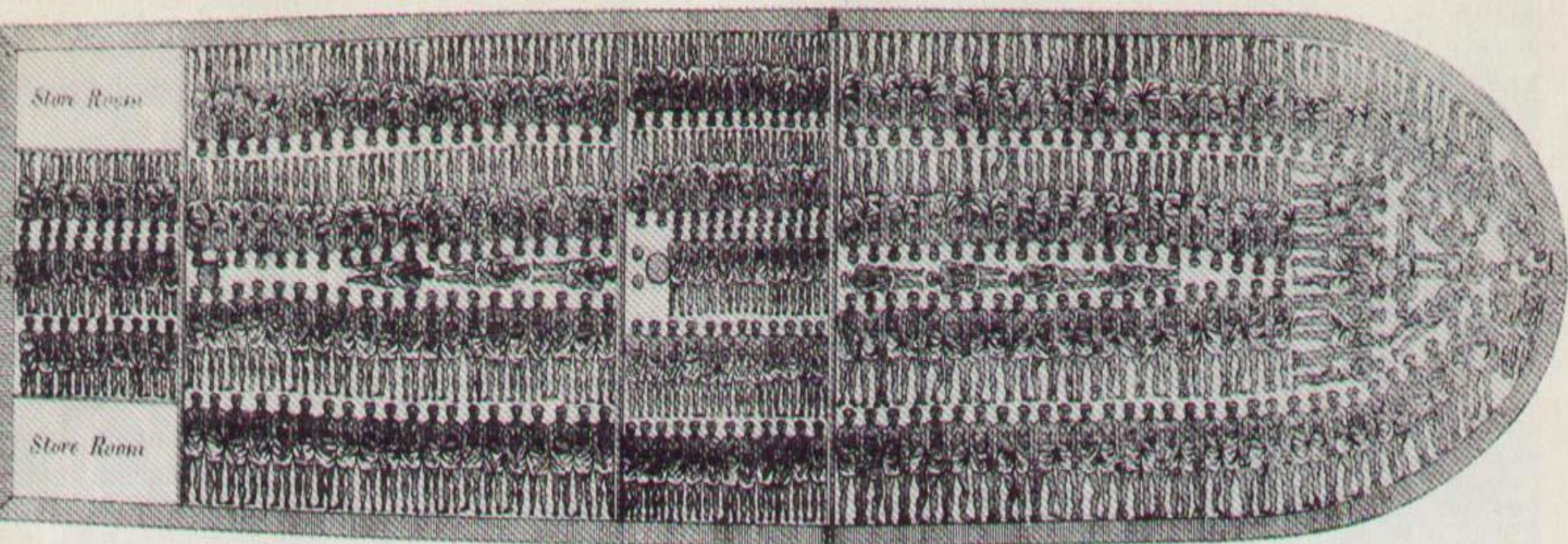




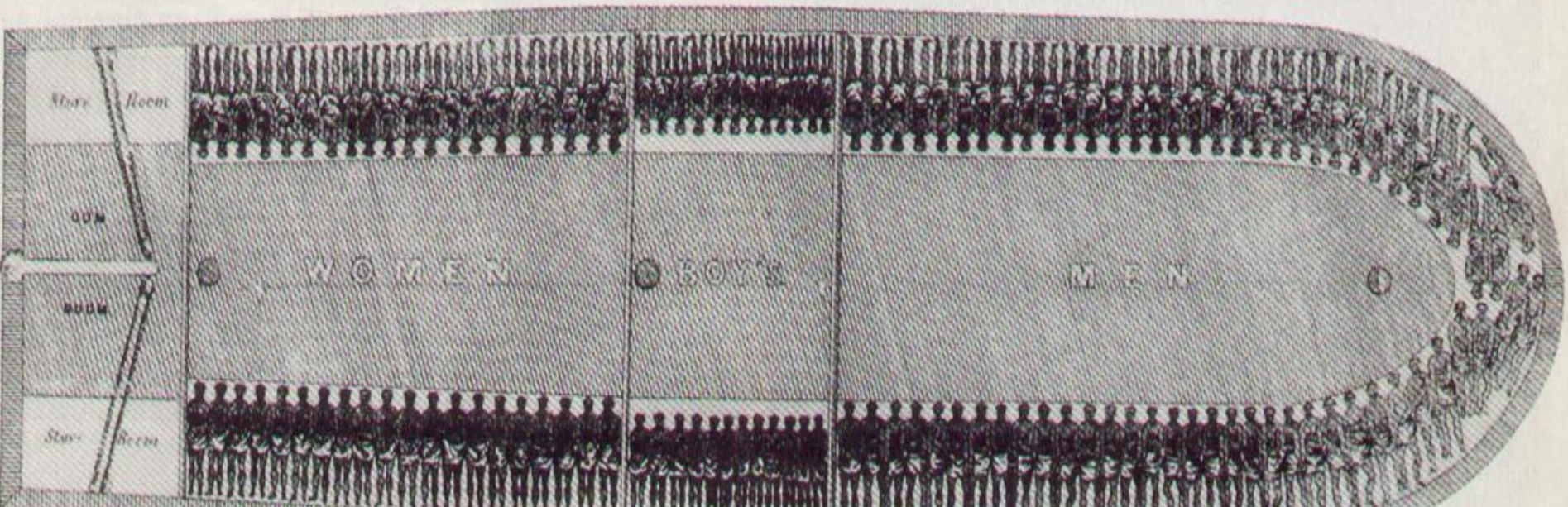
# MIDDLE PASSAGE

- Overcrowded ships that left from African ports carrying enslaved Africans that would be bought and sold once they reached the Caribbean
- Overcrowding, disease and unsanitary conditions caused many to die on the voyage- 14% died of disease on the journey
- Some slaves jumped overboard rather than continue the journey
- others staged violent uprisings- 1 in 10 Atlantic passages

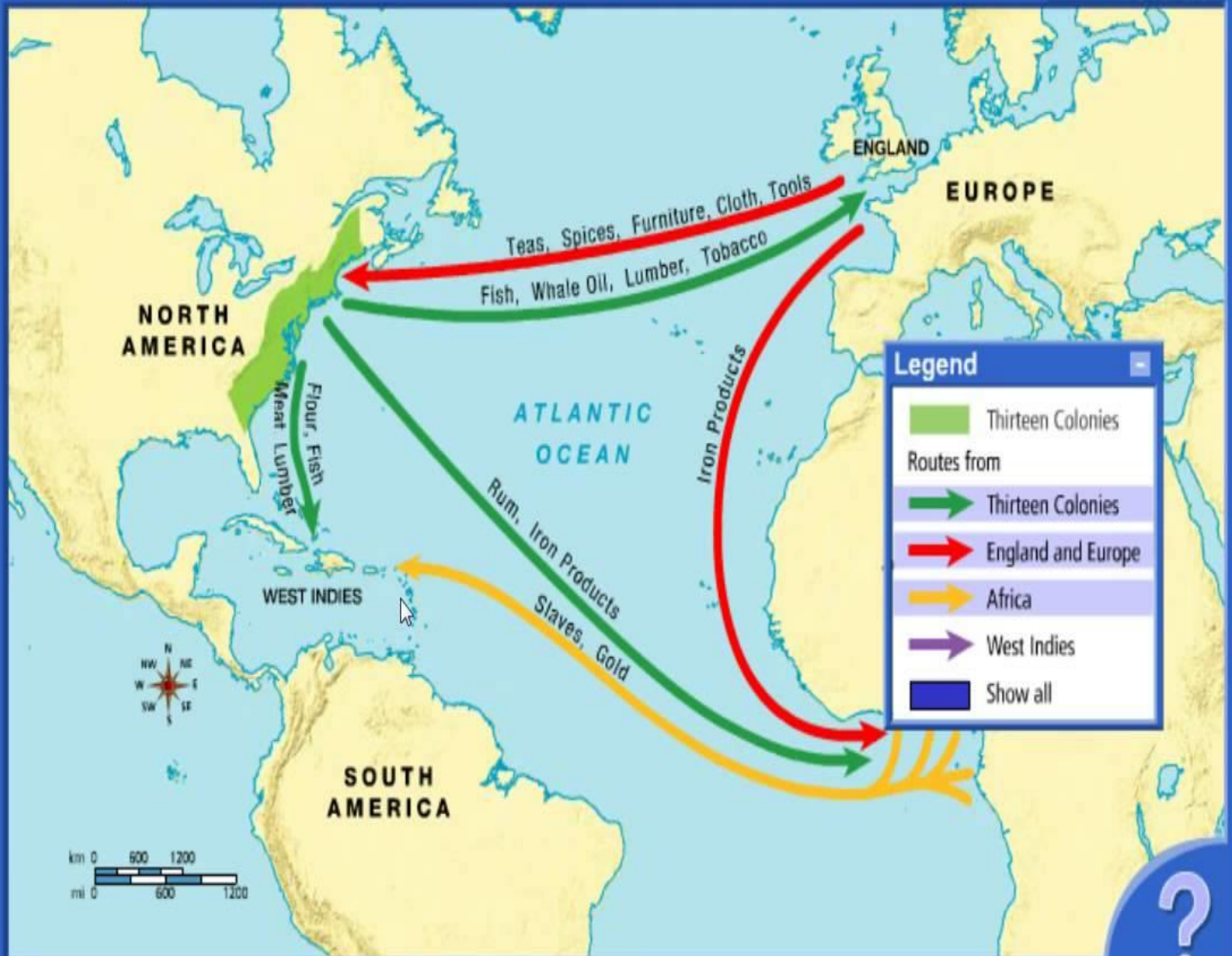




PLAN SHEWING THE STOWAGE OF 130 ADDITIONAL SLAVES ROUND THE WINGS OR SIDES OF THE LOWER DECK BY MEANS OF PLATFORMS OR SHELVES (IN THE MANNER OF GALLERIES IN A CHURCH) THE SLAVES STOWED ON THE SHELVES AND BELOW THEM HAVE ONLY A HEIGHT OF 2 FEET 7 INCHES BETWEEN THE BEAMS AND FAR LESS UNDER THE BEAMS . See Fig 1.



# Triangular Trade Routes



Click on the symbols in the Legend to see the map change.

# CHESAPEAKE AND SOUTH CAROLINA

- Slavery came to VA and Md following Bacon's Rebellion
- Elite planter/politicians led a "tobacco revolution" and bought more Africans getting rid of the need for actual workers
- 1720- Africans were 20% of the labor force; by 1740- they were 40%.
- Violence was allowed– if a master was disciplining a slave and went too far and killed him; he could not be charged with murder (1669 Va House of Burgesses Law)



Slaves harvesting sugar.



# CHESAPEAKE AND SOUTH CAROLINA

- Despite harsh treatment, tobacco was an easier crop to grow than rice and sugar in the islands.
- Tobacco planters began to buy female slaves and encouraging them to have children
- By the mid 1700s more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the enslaved workers in the Chesapeake were American born









# **AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY EMERGES**

- Slaves came from all over West and Central Africa- it was encouraged to have diverse groups so they would be less likely to unite and revolt
- In the Carolinas there was a high death rate that did not allow for extended kinship ties
- In the Chesapeake slaves were able to create strong nuclear families



# RESISTANCE AND ACCOMMODATION

- Illegal to teach slaves to read and write
- Not allowed to own property
- Punished cruelly b/c system relied on fear and intimidation
- Assertive slaves were punished more severely; in rice and tobacco growing areas slaves outnumbered whites as much as 8 to 1
- Slaves began to take Sunday as a day of rest as a right not a privilege
- When bargaining with masters failed slaves would protest silently by working slowly, breaking equipment, or stealing





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**THE STONO REBELLION (1739)**

The Stono Rebellion, the largest slave insurrection in British North America, began nearby on September 9, 1739. About 20 Africans raided a store near Wallace Creek, a branch of the Stono River. Taking guns and other weapons, they killed two shopkeepers. The rebels marched south toward promised freedom in Spanish Florida, waving flags, beating drums, and shouting "Liberty!"

*(Continued on other side)*

ERECTED BY THE SEA ISLAND FARMERS COOPERATIVE, 2001



# WHY WAS THERE NO LARGE SCALE REBELLION?

- Slaves would have had to:
  - communicate secretly and effectively across a wide area
  - Choose leaders they could trust
  - Formulate and disseminate strategy
  - Accumulate large numbers of weapons
  - Ensure no one betrayed their plans



# STONO REBELLION

- Largest slave uprising in mainland colonies
- South Carolina 1739
- Florida Governor promised freedom to fugitive slaves by Feb 1739, 69 slaves had escaped to St. Augustine
- War between England and Spain broke out and 75 slaves rose in revolt and killed a number of whites near the Stono River
- Met by South Carolina militia– 44 slave killed
- South Carolina planters increased plantation discipline and stopped the importation of slaves

