

Middle Passage Guiding Questions

Document A: Portuguese Textbook

1. (Sourcing) Where was this textbook written? How might this have influenced how it portrayed the Middle Passage?
2. (Close reading) According to the textbook, "The time between the moment the slaves were bought and when they arrived at port was very dangerous not only for the European traders but for the slaves as well." Why might the textbook's authors have chosen to compare the experience of the ship's crew to the experience of the slaves?
3. (Close reading) Why do you think the textbook used the word "migrations" to describe the Atlantic slave trade?

Document B: Slave Ship Captain

1. (Sourcing) Who was Phillips? How might his background have influenced what he wrote about the Middle Passage?
2. (Close reading) According to Phillips, what did the ship's crew do for the slaves?
3. (Close reading) According to Phillips, why was being a slave trader such an unpleasant job?

Document C: Slave Ship Doctor

1. (Sourcing) Who was Falconbridge? How might his background have influenced what he wrote about the Middle Passage?
2. (Close reading) How might the conditions on the ship have been connected to the diseases that were so common among slaves?
3. (Close reading) Why do you think Falconbridge said that most surgeons only worked on slave ships because of their financial situations?

Document D: Slave Ship Diagram

1. (Sourcing) Why was this diagram produced?

Document E: Autobiography of a Former Slave

1. (Sourcing) Who was Equiano? How might his background have influenced what he wrote about the Middle Passage?
2. (Close reading) Why do you think slaves were punished for not eating?

Final Question

Which of these documents do you believe is the most reliable source of information about the Middle Passage? Select no more than two and explain your selection using evidence from the Graphic Organizer and Guiding Questions.