

## Research Lesson Plan: Slavery: An American Institution?

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**Targeted Grade Level:** High School (11-12)

**Essential Question:** Was American slavery typical?

### Formative Assessment Prompts:

**Instructional Chunk #1:** What were the characteristics of American slavery?

**Instructional Chunk #2:** How did aspects of American slavery compare to those of slave systems in Brazil, Haiti, and Russia?

**Instructional Chunk #3:** Was American slavery typical?

**Standard Addressed:** Students will analyze historical materials to trace the development of an idea or trend **across space** or over a prolonged period of time in order to explain patterns of continuity and change.

### Problematic Prior Knowledge (PPL) Addressed

Students may believe that a) slavery only existed in the American South, and b) slavery in the American South was typical of all slave systems around the world.

### Activating Strategies:

Strategy 1: Anticipation Guide

Emphasize that we are considering slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

### Key Vocabulary to preview

### Teaching Strategies:

- Anticipation Guide to measure pre-lesson and post-lesson understanding of slavery
- Direct instruction on the characteristics of American slavery
- Document Analysis (small group) – students analyze documents related to one aspect of slavery – demographics, work, master-slave relations, or abolition – from Brazil, Haiti, and Russia. Students create museum exhibit that answers the question: Was American Slavery Typical?

## Graphic Organizer(s) Used:

- Anticipation Guide
- Document Analysis Guide

## Materials Needed:

- PowerPoint on American Slavery
- Document Sets A (demographics), B (work), C (treatment), D (abolition)
- Document Analysis Graphic Organizer
- Poster paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Markers

## Differentiation Strategies:

- Teachers can select heterogeneous groups based on ability; Document sets A and D are less challenging than Document Sets B and C.

## Instructional Plan:

### Instructional Chunk #1: Was American slavery typical?

1. **Procedures:** Ask students to complete the “Before” column in Anticipation Guide.
2. **Debrief: ask the students...**  
When you think of an image of slavery, what do you see? Do you picture slavery in the American South?

### Instructional Chunk #2:

1. **Procedures:** Direct instruction using the American Slavery Power Point. Information is organized around four aspects of slavery: demographics, work, master-slave relations, and abolition. Emphasize to students that they will need this information for the next part of the lesson.

**When discussing Runaway Slave advertisements, make clear that indentured servitude was a kind of slavery, and that systems of unfree labor were not necessarily dependent on race distinctions.**

2. **Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:** Ask students to write one fact they already knew about slavery and one fact they just learned.

### Instructional Chunk #3:

1. **Procedures:** Divide students into groups of 3-4 and distribute one document packet to each group (make multiple copies of documents packets for larger classes). Instruct students to read through the documents to determine the aspect of slavery they are analyzing (demographics, work, master-slave relations, or abolition). Students complete document analysis graphic organizer. Students then create a mini museum exhibit from the documents. They may cut and paste the documents and add their own text. Museum exhibit should answer the question, Was American slavery typical?

**Emphasize to students that they should highlight or cut/paste textual evidence to support their conclusions.**

**Variation: Ask students to complete a T-Chart or Venn Diagram that shows the similarities and differences between American slavery and slavery in other countries.**

2. **Debrief: ask the students...** to do a gallery walk, looking at each of the museum exhibits.
3. **Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:** ask students to share what new information they learned from the gallery walk.

**Return to last slide of Power Point:** European wealth from the slave trade. Western European countries that did not practice slavery in the mother country (i.e., Great Britain, France, the Netherlands) made huge profits from the slave trade in their colonial empires.

**Summarizing Strategy:** Have students complete the right-hand side of the Anticipation Guide. Ask students to report any changed responses.

**Exit ticket:** Was American slavery typical?

**Post-Lesson Summary:**

I collected 19 Anticipation Guides. All items on the guide showed changed answers from Before to After.

Number of changed answers (out of 19 responses):

1. 4
2. 12
3. 15
4. 9
5. 4
6. 11
7. 5
8. 12
9. 5

These results suggest that students have widespread misconceptions about the life expectancy for American slaves (#3), the destination of African slaves (#2), and the relative population of

enslaved peoples in the American South (#8).

### **Bibliography**

*Africa Enslaved: A Curriculum Unit on Comparative Slave Systems for Grades 9-12*

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/curriculum/slavery.php>

Dmytryshyn, Basil. *Imperial Russia: A source book, 1700-1917*. USA: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1990.

Kolchin, Peter. *Unfree Labor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/liberty-equality-fraternity-exploring-the-french-revolution/>

Peabody, Sue and Keila Grinberg. *Slavery, Freedom and the Law in the Atlantic World: A Brief History with Documents*. USA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Before	Statement about Slavery in the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	After
True/False	1. Most slaves in the United States were born in Africa	True/False
True/False	2. The biggest market for slaves from Africa was the American South	True/False
True/False	3. Slaves in the American South had longer life expectancies than slaves in other regions	True/False
True/False	4. Most slaves in the American South lived on large plantations	True/False
True/False	5. The majority of slaves in the American South worked on cotton plantations	True/False
True/False	6. American plantation owners provided slaves with food, shelter, and health care	True/False
True/False	7. Slavery declined in the American South after the abolition of the slave trade	True/False
True/False	8. Slaves outnumbered free whites in the American South	True/False
True/False	9. Racism is a key component of slavery	True/False



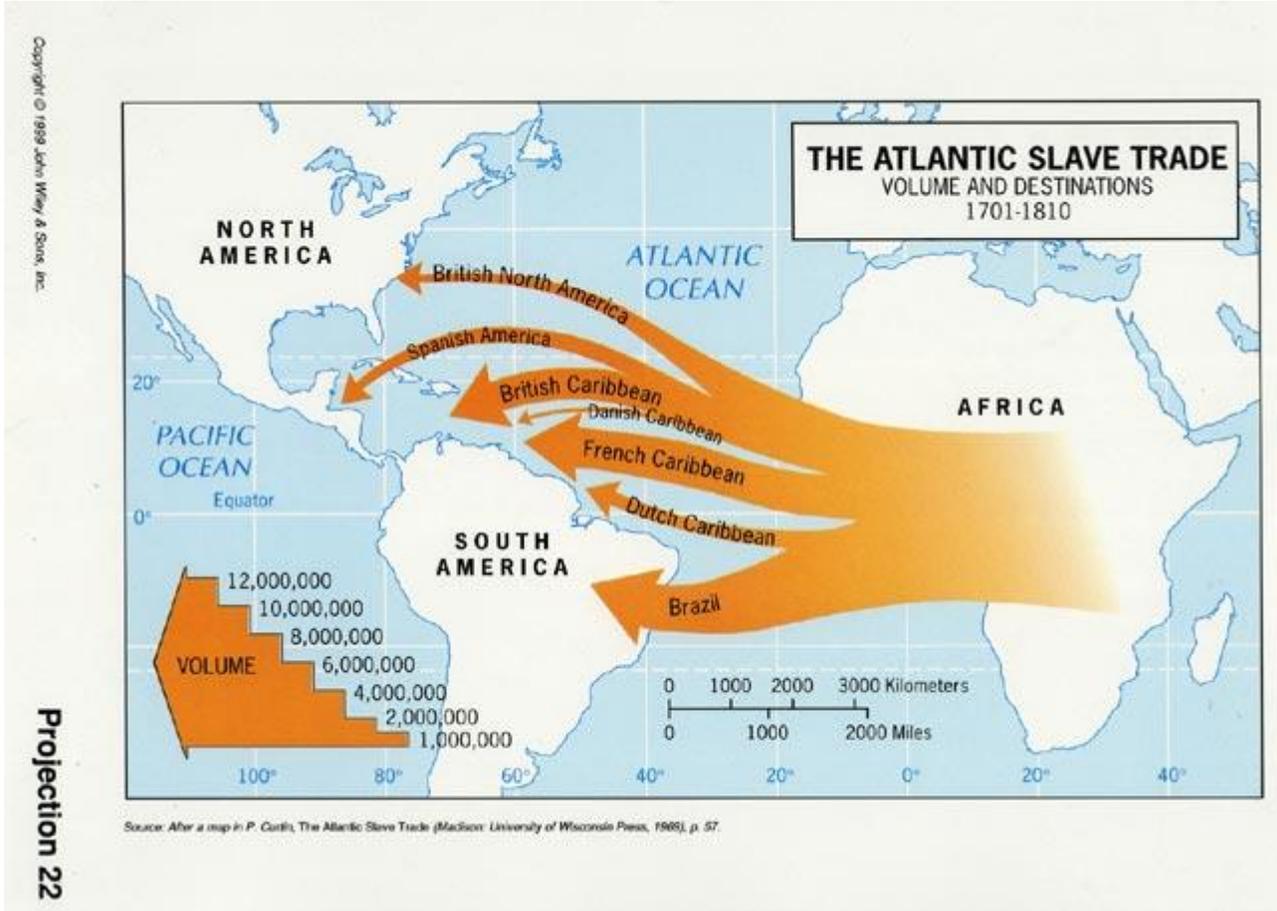
**Names:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Theme of Document Set:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Document</b>	<b>Summary of Information</b>	<b>Comparison to American Slavery</b>

**Was the American South typical in this particular aspect of slavery?**

# A-1: THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE



## **A-2: BRAZIL**

African slaves were brought into Brazil as early as 1530, with abolition in 1888. During those three centuries, Brazil received 4,000,000 Africans, over four times as many as any other American destination. Comparatively speaking, Brazil received 40% of the total number of Africans brought to the Americas, while the US received approximately 10%. Due to this huge influx of Africans, today Brazil's African-descended population is larger than the population of most African countries.

Beginning in the 1530s, slaves entered the port of Salvador and stayed in the state of Bahia, where sugar plantations rose to prominence during the colony's early years. The sugar trade then diminished and, although slaves were distributed to other parts of Brazil, many remained in Bahia and worked in the capital of Salvador. In the 1690s, gold was found in Minas Gerais, tripling the demand for slaves; of the estimated 1.7 million slaves brought into Brazil in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, about 1 million went to the gold mines and diamond fields.

By 1760, the slowdown in gold and diamonds coincided with sugar's second wind, causing a renewed influx of slaves to the Northeast. In the 1830s, coffee came to prominence in southern Brazil: 1.3 million slaves eventually made their way to the coffee plantations. Slaves were also sent to major cities and, by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, 40-50% of households in Sao Paolo, Ouro Preto, and Salvador held slaves.

### A-3: HAITI

Hispaniola, the island currently shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic, was “discovered” by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Santo Domingo, as the Spanish called it, became an outpost of the Spanish Empire, important for its position as a launching place for conquests of new territory in the Americas... Slaves were introduced in 1502 and the first sugar mill was erected in 1516. The first slaves were Taíno Indians, who dwindled from a population of hundreds of thousands in 1492 to 150 in 1550. As the indigenous population was dying of abuse and disease, African slaves were brought in; the first 15,000 Africans arrived in 1517. The Spanish settled on the eastern part of the island but focused on their more prosperous colonies in other parts of the Americas. This led, in the early 1660s, to an incursion into the western part of the island by the French.

The French originally cultivated indigo but quickly exhausted the soil, so they turned to the more profitable crop of sugarcane in the 1690s. In 1697, after decades of fighting over the territory, the Spanish ceded the western part of the island to the French, who henceforth called it Saint-Domingue (modern-day Haiti). Now fully settled in Saint-Domingue, the French focused on sugar. Sugar production was very profitable and Saint-Domingue quickly became the richest of France’s colonies. As sugar expanded, so did the slave population, necessary for the labor-intensive crop. By 1720, the French were importing 8,000 slaves each year from Africa.

When the French began to plant coffee, around 1734, profits in Saint-Domingue soared and more slaves were needed for yet another labor-intensive crop. By the mid-18th century, Saint-Domingue was producing 60% of the world’s coffee. Crop expansion required additional labor, as did the high mortality of the slave population due to harsh working conditions. By 1787, there were 450,000 slaves in Saint-Domingue. At this time, 60% of the French slaves in the Americas were in Saint-Domingue and two-thirds of those slaves were African-born.

**The Demographics of Saint Domingue (1789-1790)**

	<b>Free Whites</b>	<b>Free People of Color</b>	<b>Slaves</b>
<b>Population</b>	32,000	28,000	500,000
<b>% of Population</b>	6	5	89
<b>Growth Rate (%/year)</b>	1.35	4.5	6
<b>Doubling Time (years)</b>	52	16	12

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/500/>

## A-4: RUSSIA

It is important to point out that although Russian serfdom was indeed a form of slavery, it was a form that differed in two basic respects from the slavery that existed in the southern part of the United States...

American slaves were aliens, taken from their homes in Africa against their will and deposited in a strange land among people they did not know. As a consequence, slavery in America entailed a number of basic relationships other than that of master and slave. Master and slave were, at first, of different nationality, race, and cultural background; they spoke different languages, and practiced different religions... "the people" was a term always reserved for whites who formed the body politic.

This was not the case in Russia, where with few exceptions masters and serfs were of the same nationality...in the great interior of Russia, peasants and noblemen shared the same race, religion, and cultural roots. Nor were peasants outsiders the way American blacks were, removed from their native land and placed in a strange new world. They constituted the lowest level of society rather than outcasts from it. Many Americans advocated a United States without blacks, but to imagine a Russia without the peasants was inconceivable; they were the essence of it - and 90% of its population. When Russians spoke of "the people," they meant precisely the peasants.

Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 43-44.

### Distribution of American Slaveowners and Slaves by Size of Holdings, 1860

	<i>Number of Slaves Owned</i>				
	<b>1-9</b>	<b>10-19</b>	<b>20-49</b>	<b>50-199</b>	<b>&gt;199</b>
<b>Percentage of slaveowners</b>	71.9	16.0	9.3	2.6	0.1
<b>Percentage of slaves</b>	25.6	21.6	27.7	22.5	2.4

### Distribution of Russian Serfowners and Serfs by Size of Holdings, 1858

	<i>Number of Serfs Owned</i>			
	<b>1-20</b>	<b>21-100</b>	<b>101-500</b>	<b>&gt;500</b>
<b>Percentage of serfowners</b>	43.6	33.9	18.9	3.6
<b>Percentage of serfs</b>	3.3	15.9	37.2	43.6

Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 52-54.

## B-1: BRAZIL

### Plantations

On the plantations there is no law but the absolute will of the master, which is rudely delegated to the overseer, usually a trusted slave. At six o'clock in the morning the overseer forces the poor slave, still exhausted from the evening's labors, to rise from his rude bed and proceed to his work. The first assignment of the season is the chopping down of the forests for the next year's planting, using a scythe to hack down the smaller trees. This work normally goes on for two months, depending on the type of jungle being cut and the stamina of the slaves.

The next step is the destruction of the large trees, and this, like the previous work, continues for twelve hours each day. At night the slaves return home, where evening work of two or more hours awaits them, depending upon the character of the master. They set fire to the devastated jungle....

Centuries-old tree trunks which two months before had produced a cool, crisp atmosphere over a broad stretch of land, lie on the surface of a field ravaged by fire and covered with ashes, where the slaves are compelled to spend twelve hours under the hot sun of the equator, without a single tree to give them shelter...

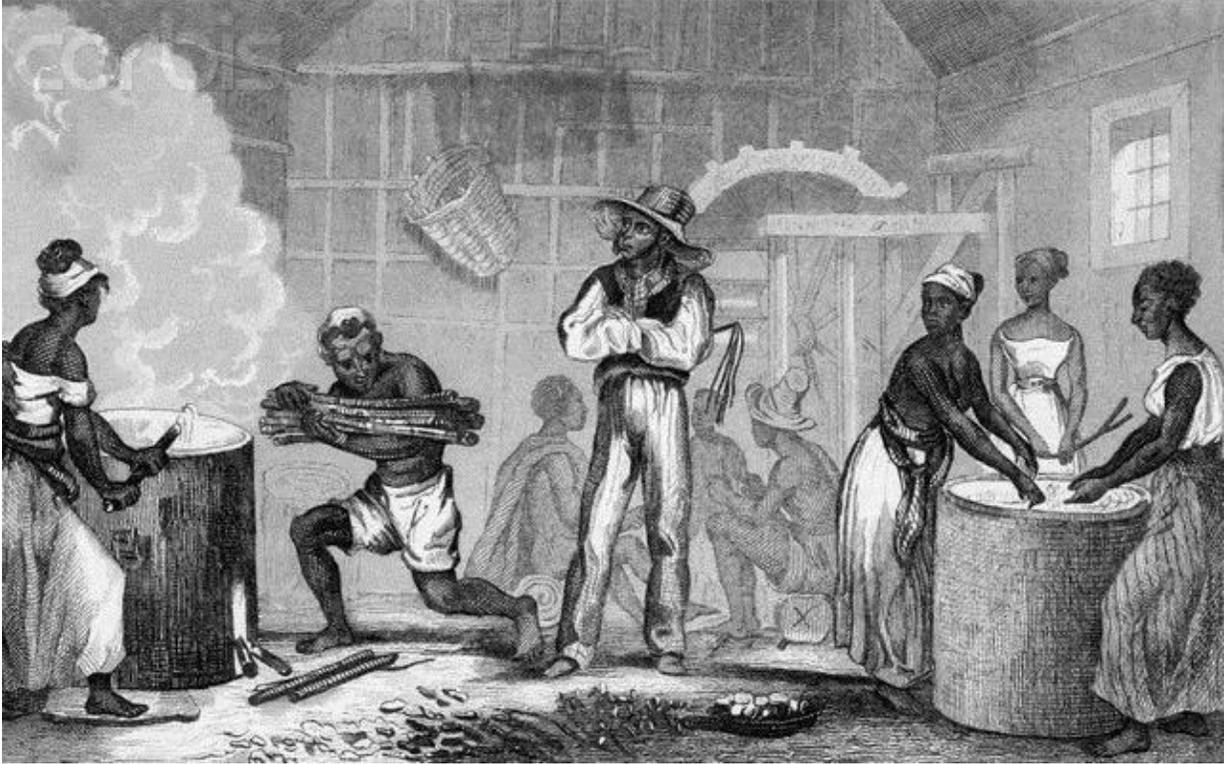
When it finally rains toward the end of December or early January, the slaves begin to seed the devastated fields, and the only tool they use in planting cotton is a small hoe, and for the rice and millet they use nothing but a stick with an iron point to hollow out the ground.

After this comes the weeding. This is painful labor for the slaves, who, with nothing to work with but a weeding-hook, are forced to stand in a stooped position during the entire day, cutting the shoots or other native plants, and enduring a temperature in the sun of 40 degrees Celsius [104° F]. This work, which is the most arduous, continues as long as it takes for the plants to fully establish themselves.

The next step is the rice cutting in May or June, which each slave accomplishes with a small knife, cutting the stems one by one, and at night beating them with a branch to loosen the grains. During this phase of their labor the overseers demand a certain number of *alqueires* of rice from each slave, and if the unfortunate person does not produce what is demanded of him, the tragedy is brought to an end with *the daily bread of the slave*, that is, the lash.

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/curriculum/slavery.php>

**B-2: BRAZIL**



Sugar Plantation, Brazil

### B-3: HAITI

Those who survived [the first few years] and were fully inducted into the plantation system occupied a variety of positions. In general, slave laborers on all plantations were organized into work groups, or *ateliers*, usually one or two major ones and a smaller one. The first were composed of the strongest and healthiest slaves, both men and women, doing the heaviest and hardest work, such as the tilling and clearing of the soil, digging the ditches and canals, planting and picking on the coffee estates, or cutting the cane on the sugar plantations, as well as the cutting and clearing of trees and extraction of rocks, which were tasks undertaken by the men...

Slaves were awakened at five in the morning by the sound of the *commandeur's* whistle or by several cracks of his whip or, on the large plantations of over a hundred slaves, by a huge bell. After the recital of perfunctory prayers by the steward, slaves began work in the fields until eight, were allowed to stop for a meager breakfast, and then returned until noon. The midday break lasted until two, when they returned at the crack of the whip to labor in the field until sundown. On many plantations slaves were forced at the end of the day to gather feed for the draft animals, often having to travel considerable distances from the plantation. Finally, firewood had to be gathered, and dinner, consisting of beans and manioc, or a few potatoes, but rarely, if ever, any meat or fish, had to be prepared. During the grinding season on the sugar plantations, slaves then faced what must have seemed like interminable hours of night work at the mills, or of husking and sorting on the coffee plantations.



This depiction of a sugar plantation in Saint Domingue emphasizes the grinding mill and refining vats. An overseer with a gun supervises the slave labor. By 1789, Saint Domingue excelled at sugar production, outpacing other French colonies and the British alike.

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/curriculum/slavery.php>

## **B-4: RUSSIA**

*This document is an account by an early Russian intellectual, Alexander Radishchev (1749-1802), who wrote about the Russian peasants' condition in the book A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow (1790), which was repressed by the government until 1905. His account reveals peasants' suffering and reactions and also the reformist zeal of a segment of the upper class.*

A few steps from the road I saw a peasant ploughing a field. The weather was hot... It was now Sunday. The ploughing peasant, of course, belonged to a landed proprietor, who would not let him pay a commutation tax (obrok). The peasant was ploughing very carefully. The field, of course, was not part of his master's land. He turned the plough with astonishing ease.

"God help you," I said, walking up to the ploughman. "Have you no time to work during the week, and can you not rest on Sundays, in the hottest part of the day, at that?"

"In a week, sir, there are six days, and we go six times a week to work on the master's fields; in the evening, if the weather is good, we haul to the master's house the hay that is left in the woods; and on holidays the women and girls go walking in the woods, looking for mushrooms and berries..."

"Do you have a large family?"

"Three sons and three daughters. The eldest is nine years old."

"But how do you manage to get food enough, if you only have the holidays free?"

"Not only the holidays: the nights are ours, too. If a fellow isn't lazy, he won't starve to death. You see, one horse is resting; and when this one gets tired, I'll take the other; so the work gets done."

"Do you work the same way for your master?"

"No, Sir, it would be a sin to work the same way. On his fields there are a hundred hands for one mouth, while I have two for seven mouths; you can figure it out for yourself. No matter how hard you work for the master, no one will thank you for it. The master will not pay our head tax; but, though he doesn't pay it, he doesn't demand one sheep, one hen, or any linen or butter the less..."

The words of this peasant awakened in me a multitude of thoughts. I thought especially of the inequality of treatment within the peasant class. I compared the crown peasants with the manorial peasants. They both live in villages; but the former pay a fixed sum, while the latter must be prepared to pay whatever their master demands. The former are judged by their equals; the latter are dead to the law, except in criminal cases. A member of society becomes known to the government protecting him, only when he breaks the social bonds, when he becomes a criminal! This thought made my blood boil.

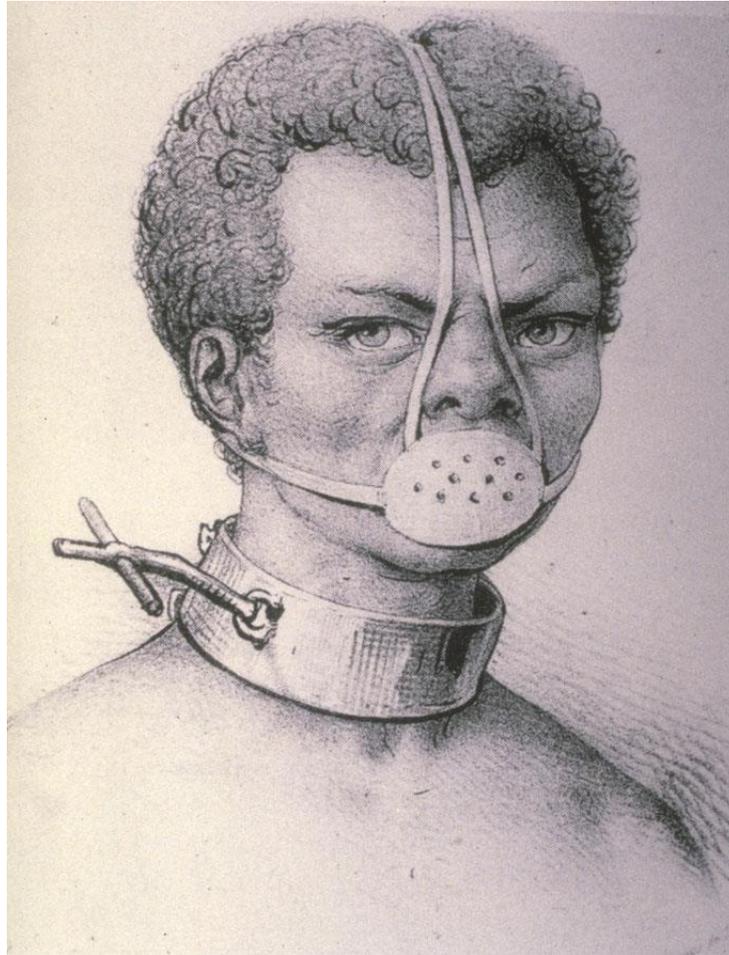
[http://www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/Radishch.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/Radishch.html)

## **C-1: BRAZIL**

If idleness is harmful, the abuse of labor is even more so. We are so convinced of the truth of this principle that we do not hesitate to affirm that a third of the slaves in Brazil die as a result of the excessive labor that they are forced to endure... When I asked a planter why the death rate among his slaves was so exaggerated, and pointed out that this obviously did him great harm, he quickly replied that, on the contrary, it brought him no injury at all, since when he purchases a slave it was with the purpose of using him for only a single year, after which very few could survive; but that nevertheless he made them work in such a way that he not only recovered the capital employed in their purchase, but also made a considerable profit! And besides, what does it matter if the life of a black man is destroyed by one year of unbearable toil if from this we derive the same advantages which we would have if he worked at a slower pace for a long period of time? This is how many people reason.

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/curriculum/slavery.php>

## C-2: BRAZIL



[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacques\\_Etienne\\_Arago\\_-\\_Castigo\\_de\\_Escravos,\\_1839.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacques_Etienne_Arago_-_Castigo_de_Escravos,_1839.jpg)

This image illustrates a punishment inflicted upon slaves, as observed by the Frenchman Jacques Arago during one of his trips to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1817-1820. According to his writings, slaves were “punished in this manner because their misery caused them to eat earth to end their lives.” Medical researchers, however, now recognize that eating earth (*geophagy*) is a response to nutritional deficiencies; it continues to occur under conditions of extreme poverty today.

### C-3: HAITI

By allotting small plots to the slaves for their own subsistence, the owner freed himself from the cost and responsibility of feeding them; yet these “kitchen gardens,” meager as they were and with as little time as the slaves had to plant and tend to their crops, came to be seen by the slaves as their own and thus eventually contributed to the development of a sense, if not of “proprietorship,” at least of the firm notion that the land belonged to those who cultivated it....

For those slaves fortunate enough to have produced a small surplus from their gardens, Sundays and holidays meant market day, and they were allowed to sell their produce in town.... Permission to go into town was not, however, given out gratuitously to whoever wished to go. Passes were distributed selectively and in rotation, most often to creole slaves and especially to the women, on Saturday night. Those who received a pass were allowed to leave on the following Sunday morning but were required back at sundown, whereupon they were to give up their passes....

However, until 1784, the practice of allotting small pieces of land to the slaves for their own cultivation was not a legally recognized system and was not necessarily the rule on all plantations. Where this was the case, the master would be required to supply the minimum food rations stipulated in the Black Code: 2½ pots of manioc and either 2 pounds of salt beef or 3 pounds of fish per week. Rarely, if ever, were *any* of the Code’s provisions governing the conditions of the slaves enforced in Saint Domingue. In reality, an average slave’s diet provided by the master to sustain an entire day’s work amounted to little more than seven or eight boiled potatoes and a bit of water.

Under slavery, it has been written, “all is a question of practice; the will of the master is everything. It is from his will, and his will alone, that the slave may expect misery or well-being.”

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/curriculum/slavery.php>

## C-4: RUSSIA

Although American slavery and Russian serfdom were both preeminently systems of labor exploitation designed to support a dominant class of landowners through the toil of their human property, the treatment that property received diverged significantly during the century preceding emancipation...

American slaveowners were largely resident, both physically and mentally, and expressed an increasingly paternalistic [fatherly] concern for the lives of their people. Russian serf owners usually approached their serfs as absentee lords, even when physically present, ignoring them except to extract income from them...

American slaves did enjoy a higher material standard of living than their Russian (or Latin American) counterparts, but they also suffered from much greater day-to-day interference in their lives. Although the slaves enjoyed greater protection and sometimes a warmer personal relation with their owners, the serfs were usually subject to less regulation and were therefore freer to lead their lives as they wished.

Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 155-156.

### **Newspaper Advertisements for the Sale of Serfs, 1797**

*For sale well behaved menial craftsmen: two tailors, a shoemaker, a watchmaker, a cook, a coach maker, a wheeler, an engraver, a night workman, and two coachmen. They may be seen and the price [for them] may be ascertained from their own pomeschchik [landlord]... There, too, are available for sale three young racing horses, one stallion, two geldings, and a herd of hunting dogs, about fifty, which will be one year old in January or February.*

*There is for sale... a menial man. He is twenty-five years old, a trained woman's shoe maker who knows his profession exceptionally well; in addition he performs all domestic, coachman's, and footman's tasks, as well as waiting at the table. He has a pregnant wife twenty-two years old who sews, irons, starches. Waits on the lady of the house, and cooks. They have a three year old daughter.*

*An officer has for sale a sixteen year old girl, formerly belonging to a poor house, who knows how to knit, sew, iron, starch. And dress a lady; she has a nice figure and pretty face.*

Basil Dmytryshyn, *Imperial Russia: A source book, 1700-1917* (USA: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1990)

### D-1: Timeline of Emancipation

1774-1804	Northern United States (gradual in some cases)
1804	Haiti
1807	Prussia; Poland
1813-1814	Argentina; Colombia (gradual)
1816-1819	Baltic Provinces of Russian Empire
1823-1842	Central America; Mexico; Bolivia; Uruguay; Chile
1833-1838	British Colonies
1848	German states; Austrian Empire; French Colonies; Danish Colonies
1851-54	Ecuador; Peru; Venezuela
1851	Hungary
1861	Russia
1863	Dutch Colonies
1864	Romania
1865	Southern United States
1873	Puerto Rico
1886	Cuba
1871-1888	Brazil

Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 49.

## **D-2: BRAZIL**

The slave trade lasted longer in Brazil than in almost any other country in the Americas. Slavery was abolished in the British and French Caribbean, the United States, and Spanish America a generation or more before it was abolished in Brazil. When Brazil gained independence, in 1822, slavery was such an entrenched part of the system that the elites who structured the new nation never seriously debated the issue. Brazilians believed that the prosperity of their country depended on the institution of slavery, since they so desperately needed the labor, but slavery was rarely defended on racial grounds.

The abolitionist movement in Brazil began to gain widespread support in the late 1860s, due in part to pressure from the outside world. Also, at the end of the legal slave trade, Brazil experienced a labor shortage because slavery had been sustained by continued imports of slaves rather than reproduction among the slave population. And, finally, the slaves were getting harder to control, and slave owners feared revolts. In 1871, Brazil passed the “Law of the Free Womb,” freeing from that time forward the children born of slaves. In 1885, Brazil passed the Sexagenarian Law, freeing slaves over 65 years of age. Finally, on May 13, 1888, the “Golden Law” abolished slavery with these simple words:

*Article 1: From the date of enactment of this law slavery is declared extinct.*

*Article 2: All conflicting legislation is hereby overturned.*

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/curriculum/slavery.php>

## D-3: HAITI

With such a lopsided population—where slaves vastly outnumbered free colonists—slaves had always practiced forms of resistance. Groups of runaway slaves, known as maroons, would escape to the mountains to hide. They armed themselves and would attack plantations for supplies. François Makandal, the most famous maroon leader, led a six-year rebellion from 1751-1757 that sought to overthrow the white regime. Maroons were the most common form of resistance along with the continuing practice of voodoo, a slave religion whose practice was forbidden by law; suicide, infanticide, arson, and poison also provided slaves with ways to rebel against their masters.

Then came 1789, a decisive year in the history of France. The cry of “Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!” opened the French Revolution. The impact of the revolution reached Saint-Domingue, escalating tensions between *grands blancs* (big whites: the elites, plantation owners and the like), *petits blancs* (little whites: merchants, shopkeepers, etc.), and free *gens de couleur* (mulattoes, who were often wealthy landowners but did not have the same rights as white colonists). *Grands blancs* wanted local autonomy from France; mulattoes saw their chance for citizenship and equality; and *petits blancs* were eager to protect their position in the color-based class system. All of these groups were against freeing the slaves. Amid all of this infighting, the slaves, who outnumbered the free population more than 10 to 1, began to organize. Why was liberty and equality not meant for them as well?

In August 1791, the rebellion began with a voodoo priest predicting that a revolt would free the slaves of Saint-Domingue. The slaves set about burning plantations and killing all of the whites they encountered. Saint-Domingue was an inferno for months. The revolution had begun. During the following two years, the attacks continued and eventually France sent agents to try to quell the uprising. In 1793 the remarkable Toussaint L’Ouverture, a former slave, rose to power. L’Ouverture battled French, Spanish, and British forces and, by 1801, had control of Santo Domingo (current-day Dominican Republic), where he eradicated slavery. At this point, Napoleon tried to regain control of Saint-Domingue so as to restore French rule. L’Ouverture was captured in 1802, deported to France, and killed in 1803, but the former slaves were still strong without him. On November 18, 1803, the French were dealt a mortal blow and Saint-Domingue was no more. Independence was proclaimed on January 1, 1804 for the new country of Haiti (*hayti* was the Taíno word for “mountainous place”). Haitian independence marks the first achieved in Latin America and the only successful slave revolt in modern history.

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/orgs/hemispheres/curriculum/slavery.php>

## **D-4: RUSSIA**

The process of emancipation differed sharply in Russia and the American South. Southern slaveowners vehemently resisted all proposals to interfere with their authority over their slaves and finally, in 1861, took their states out of the Union rather than tolerate the election of a president committed to stopping the spread of slavery into new territory. The result was civil war, the defeat of "slave power," and an emancipation conceived and administered by northerners who held little sympathy for the slaveowners or their interests...

In Russia emancipation came peacefully, the result of a decision by Tsar Alexander II and his advisors that serfdom was an anachronism and an impediment to progress that could no longer be tolerated. Although many noblemen were unhappy with this decision, there was no overt resistance, no threat to take up arms as southern planters did in the United States...

Emancipation in the United States South was violent and part of a conscious effort to destroy the power of the slaveowning class; emancipation in Russia was peaceful and carried out with the interests of noblemen in mind.

Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 50.

### **Alexander II The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia The Manifesto of February 19, 1861 [EXCERPTS]**

WE thus became convinced that the problem of improving the condition of serfs was a sacred inheritance bequeathed to Us by OUR predecessors, a mission which, in the course of events, Divine Providence has called upon Us to fulfill.

WE have begun this task by expressing OUR confidence toward the Russian nobility, which has proven on so many occasions its devotion to the Throne, and its readiness to make sacrifices for the welfare of the country...

Having invoked Divine assistance, WE have resolved to execute this task.

On the basis of the above-mentioned new arrangements, the serfs will receive in time the full rights of free rural inhabitants.

The nobles, while retaining their property rights to all the lands belonging to them, grant the peasants perpetual use of their household plots in return for a specified obligation; and, to assure their livelihood as well as to guarantee fulfillment of their obligations toward time government, [the nobles] grant them a portion of arable land fixed by the said arrangements as well as other property.

While enjoying these land allotments, the peasants are obliged, in return, to fulfill obligations to the noblemen fixed by the same arrangements. In this status, which is temporary, the peasants are temporarily bound.

[http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Alexander\\_II\\_Emancipation\\_Manifesto\\_1861](http://academic.shu.edu/russianhistory/index.php/Alexander_II_Emancipation_Manifesto_1861)