



HISTORY
OF
PHILIP'S WAR
COMMONLY
THE GREAT INDIAN WAR

Rum and Revolution: Rhode Island's Role in the Triangular Trade

GUIDING QUESTION:

How were the economies of the New England colonies both dependent on the Triangular Trade and ultimately disrupted by the policies of Great Britain?

CO-AUTHORS:

Marisa Rubel, School Lane Charter School IB Campus, Bensalem, Pennsylvania
Christopher Stewart, North Lakes Academy Charter School, Forest Lake, Minnesota

► OVERVIEW

In the sixteenth century, the Spanish and Portuguese began to transport enslaved Africans to their colonies in the Americas, followed by other European nations. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, molasses and rum were essential to the New England economy. Rhode Island controlled up to 60 percent of the slave trade to North America. Slave traders from New England, Portugal, the Netherlands, Spain, France, and England brought enslaved people to the Caribbean in exchange for molasses. New Englanders turned the molasses into rum and traded it across the Atlantic to purchase more enslaved Africans. Great Britain's 1733 Molasses Act levied a tax on molasses imported from non-British colonies in the West Indies. To avoid paying the tax, ships began smuggling molasses. In this lesson, students will explore Rhode Island's unique role in the Triangular Trade.

► OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- › Analyze how each leg of the Triangular Trade created global and local trade interdependence;
- › Explain the role of Rhode Island and the northern colonies in the Triangular Trade; and
- › Discuss the potential effects of the Molasses Act of 1733 on New England economies and in stimulating revolutionary sentiments towards the British colonial government.

► STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- › CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- › CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- › CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3 Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- › D2.Eco.15.6-8. Explain the benefits and the costs of trade policies to individuals, businesses, and society.
- › D2.Geo.11.6-8. Explain how the relationship between the environmental characteristics of places and production of goods influences the spatial patterns of world trade.
- › D2.His.15.6-8. Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past.

► DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Account Book, Stephen Mumford, July 1770 (excerpt and translation)
Rhode Island Historical Society (MSS 9001)

An Act of Parliament Passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of His Majesty King George the Second, 1733 (Molasses Act of 1733)
Massachusetts Historical Society
https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=212

Hand-colored print, William A. V. Clark, *Ten views in the island of Antigua*, 1823
British Art Center, Yale University Library
<https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/orbis:4515711>

Lithograph, William Clark, *Interior of a Boiling House*, c. 1833
John Carter Brown Library (75-199-5)
<https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCB~1~1~2013~3100005:Interior-of-a-boiling-house>

Narrative of Slave Revolt on Ship off Africa, 1730
Rhode Island Historical Society (MSS 17 Box 2, Folder 1730)
<http://library.providence.edu/encompass/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2020/12/George-Scott-Testimony-with-transcription.pdf>

SECONDARY SOURCES

Essay, Kelvis F. Hernandez, “Account of the Slave Ship *Sally*”
EnCompass, Rhode Island Historical Society
<https://library.providence.edu/encompass/rhode-island-slavery-and-the-slave-trade/primary-sources/account-of-the-slave-ship-sally/>

Essay, Jennifer Galpern, “Narrative of Slave Revolt on Ship off Africa”
EnCompass, Rhode Island Historical Society
<https://library.providence.edu/encompass/rhode-island-slavery-and-the-slave-trade/primary-sources/narrative-of-slave-revolt-on-ship-off-africa/>

Essay, Joanne Pope Melish, “Rhode Island, Slavery, and the Slave Trade”
EnCompass, Rhode Island Historical Society
<https://library.providence.edu/encompass/rhode-island-slavery-and-the-slave-trade/rhode-island-slavery-and-the-slave-trade/>

Map, *Map of the Sally’s Voyage*
Center for Digital Scholarship, Brown University
<https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/sally/gfx/triangletradelg.jpg>

Map, Raymond P. Stearns, *Triangular Trade, voyage of the Sanderson from Newport, RI, 1752, 1752*
University of Rhode Island
<https://digitalhistories.kennesaw.edu/items/show/65>

► TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- › Triangular Trade Primary Source Packet
- › Triangular Trade Comparison Activity
- › Molasses Act of 1733 Activity

► ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- › Prepare to project the maps, *Map of the Sally’s Voyage* and *Triangular Trade, Voyage of the Sanderson from Newport, RI, 1752*.
- › Print one copy of the Triangular Trade Primary Source Packet for each group of three students.
- › Print one copy of the Triangular Trade Comparison Activity and the Molasses Act of 1733 Exit Ticket for each student.
- › Review the articles “Account of the Slave Ship *Sally*,” “Narrative of Slave Revolt on Ship off Africa,” and “Rhode Island, Slavery, and the Slave Trade” for background information.

► PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE (10 MINUTES)

- › Project the map, *Map of the Sally’s Voyage*. Ask students to reflect on their current definition of the Triangular Trade. Ask:
 - › *How would you define Triangular Trade?*
 - › *What terms or concepts do you associate with the Triangular Trade?*
 - › *What groups of people were involved in the Triangular Trade?*
- › Tell students that this system affected three regions of the world in different ways, but it is traditionally studied broadly as a global topic without a local focus.
- › Project the map, *Triangular Trade, Voyage of the Sanderson from Newport, RI, 1752*. Explain that this map relates to a specific voyage of a Rhode Island ship in 1752.
- › Ask the students to identify the key differences between the two maps.

When teaching this topic, explain to students that historians now use the term “enslaved person” or “enslaved laborer” when describing those who experienced slavery and the slave trade. This recognizes that they were people experiencing slavery.

ACTIVITY TWO (10 MINUTES)

- › Organize students into groups of three students each.
- › Provide a brief overview of how rum is produced (when sugar cane is processed to produce sugar, molasses is a byproduct, which is fermented to create the alcoholic beverage).
- › Give each group a Triangular Trade Primary Source Packet, and assign each student one of the three sources.
- › Distribute one copy of the Triangular Trade Comparison Activity to each student.
- › Explain that in small groups, each student will be responsible for a document that represents local history connected to each leg of the Triangular Trade (colonial America, West Africa, or the Caribbean).
- › Students should look at their source independently first, and then share their answers to the questions with their group.
- › Give students time to analyze their sources and share their findings with their groups.
- › Select students to share the key takeaway for each document as it relates to the Triangular Trade.

ACTIVITY THREE (40 MINUTES)

- › Project the map, *Triangular Trade, Voyage of the Sanderson from Newport, RI, 1752*.
- › Explain that many Caribbean colonies were under Spanish, French, or Dutch control. New England merchants wanted to trade with these colonies to purchase molasses.
- › Distribute the Molasses Act of 1733 Activity.
 - › **Teacher Tip:** This activity includes three versions, one with the original text, one with modern spelling, and one with a condensed summary version for differentiation. Choose the version(s) most appropriate for your students.

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- › Teachers may collect the Triangular Trade Comparison Activity for feedback.
- › Teachers may collect the Molasses Act of 1733 Exit Ticket.
- › Teachers may use the Molasses Act of 1733 Exit Ticket to introduce other pre-Revolution taxation policies, such as the Sugar Act of 1764.

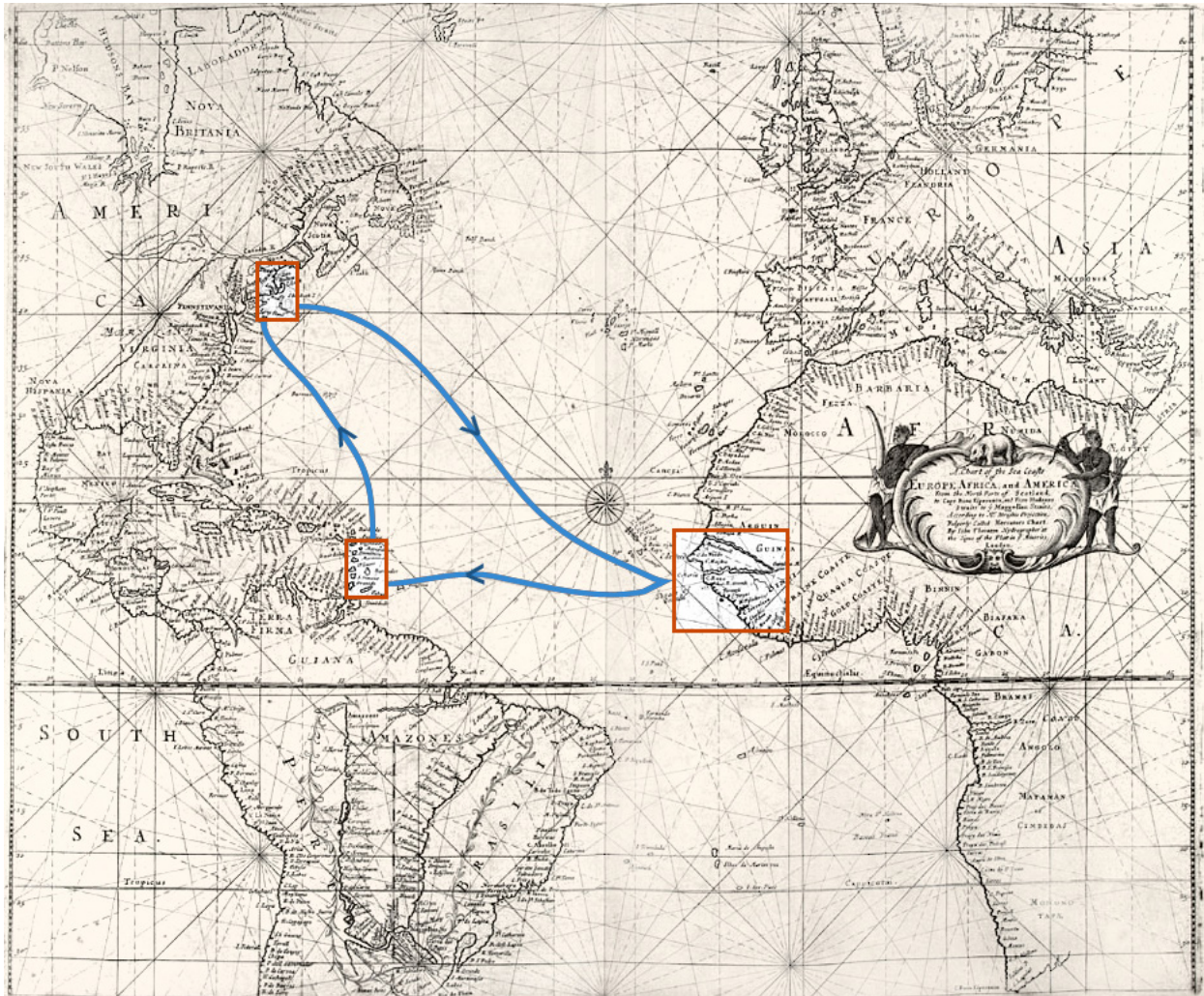
Students interested in this topic might be interested in researching the following for an NHD project:

- › **Mercantilism and the Navigation Acts (1651, 1660)**
- › **South Carolina's Negro Act of 1735**
- › **The Sugar Act of 1764**
- › **Destruction of the HMS *St John* (1764)**
- › **James DeWolf and the sloop *Polly* (1789)**

To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to: nhd.org/RevIdeals.

Map of the Sally's Voyage

Map, Map of the Sally's Voyage
Center for Digital Scholarship, Brown University
<https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/sally/gfx/triangletradelq.jpg>

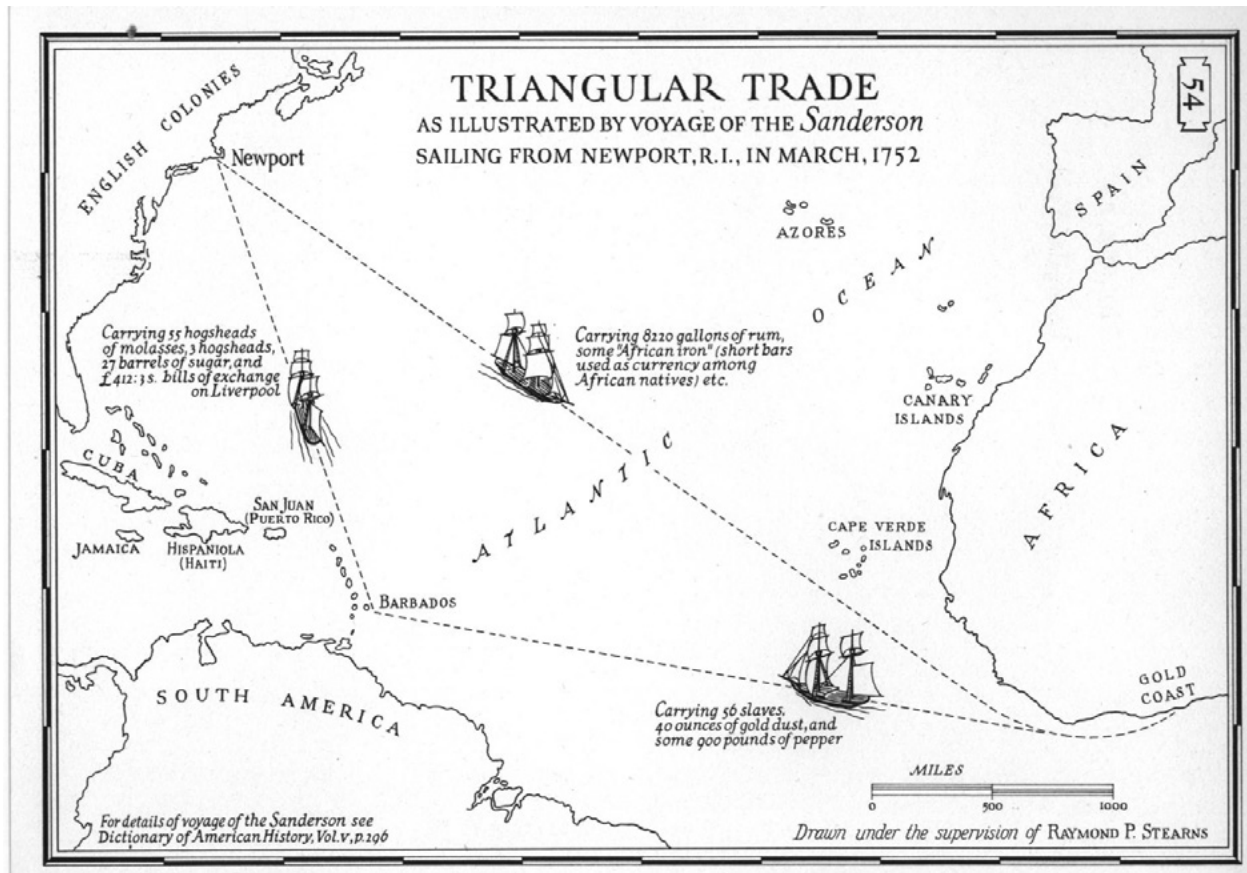


Triangular Trade, Voyage of the Sanderson from Newport, RI, 1752

Map, Raymond P. Stearns, *Triangular Trade, voyage of the Sanderson from Newport, RI, 1752, 1752*

University of Rhode Island

<https://digitalhistories.kennesaw.edu/items/show/65>

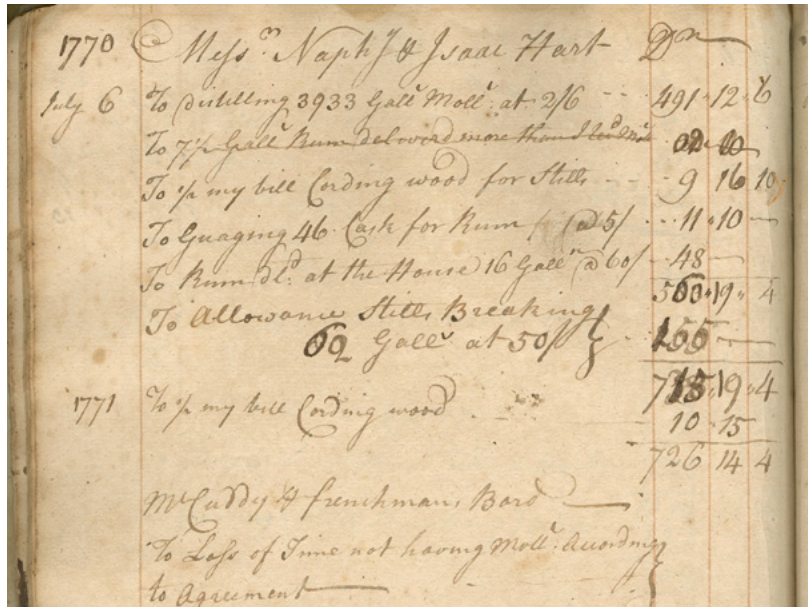


Triangular Trade Primary Source Packet

SOURCE ONE

Account Book, Stephen Mumford, July 1770 (excerpt and translation)
Rhode Island Historical Society (MSS 9001)

Use this source, a daily log of goods sold in the Rhode Island town of East Greenwich, to consider the role merchants played in the Triangular Trade.



Note: 1 pound was worth 20 shillings; 1 shilling equaled 12 pence

Many merchants did their math in shillings and then divided for pounds for the totals . . . for example the rum delivered was 60 shillings a gallon and no pence as indicated by "60/" . . . which is the same as 3 shillings and less/faster writing to write "60/" than "£3/0/0"
£1 = 20s

	Translation ¹	pounds (£)	shillings (s)	pence (d)
1770	Messieurs Naph...y & Isaac Hart		Debits	
July 6	To Distilling 3933 Gallons of Molasses at 2 shillings 6 pence per gallon	491	12	6
	To 7 1/2 Gallons Rum delivered more than I Received Molasses	22	10	
	To 1/2 my bill Cording wood for Stills [a stack of wood 4 feet wide, 4 feet high and 8 feet long = 128 cubic feet of wood = 1 Cord]	9	16	10
	To Gauging [measuring how many gallons in each cask or barrel] 46 Cask for Rum at 5 shillings per cask	11	10	
	To Rum delivered at the House 16 gallons @ 60 shillings or 3 pounds per gallon	48		
	[subtotal]	563	19	4
	To Allowance Stills Breaking 62 Gallons at 50 shillings or 2 pounds 10 shillings per gallon [lost gallons due to broken stills]	155		
		715	19	4
1771	To 1/2 my bill Cording Wood	10	15	
	[total]	726	14	4
	Mr Cuddy & Frenchman's Board [rented room and food, it seems that the writer did not catch the Frenchman's name to write it down]			
	To Loss of Time not having Molasses According to Agreement [the cost of not running the stills to make rum because there is no or not enough molasses]			

¹ Translation and notes provided by the Rhode Island Historical Society.

Triangular Trade Primary Source Packet (Con't)

Molasses merchants were very common in the New England colonies. They purchased molasses and sold millions of gallons to more than 150 distilleries. Distilleries turned molasses into rum. Many of these distilleries were located along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, and many were in Rhode Island. Rum was a highly desired product. How did this type of work support the Triangular Trade?

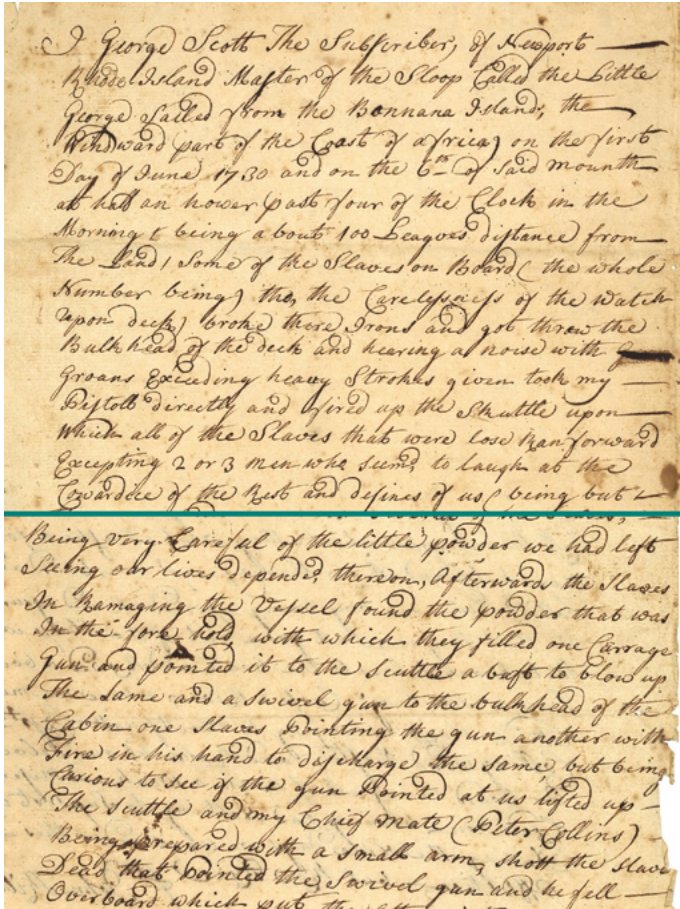
Triangular Trade Primary Source Packet (Con't)

SOURCE TWO

Narrative of Slave Revolt on Ship off Africa, 1730 (excerpts)
Rhode Island Historical Society (MSS 17 Box 2, Folder 1730)

<http://library.providence.edu/encompass/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2020/12/George-Scott-Testimony-with-transcription.pdf>

Use this source, an account of a revolt aboard a ship near the coast of Africa, to consider the cruel treatment of West Africans as part of the Triangular Trade.



Transcription: ²

"I George Scott . . . of Newport, Rhode Island Master of the Sloop called the Little George sailed from the Bonnana Island; the windward part of the coast of Africa on the first day of June 1730 and on the 6th of said month at half an hour past four of the clock in the morning & being about 100 leagues distance from the land / some of the slaves on board (the whole number being, tho, the carelessness of the watch upon deck) broke there irons and got threw the bulk head [dividing wall] of the deck and hearing a noise with groans exceeding heavy strokes given took my pistol directly and fired up the shuttle upon which all of the slaves that were loose ran forward excepting 2 or 3 men who seemed to laugh at the cowardice of the rest . . .

. . . Being very careful of the little powder we had left seeing our lives depended there on, afterward, the slaves in ramaging [searching] the vessel found the powder that was in the fore hold, with which they filled one carrage gun and pointed it to the scuttle [metal container used to store coal] about to blow up the same and a swivel gun to the bulkhead of the cabin one slaves pointing the gun another with fire in his hand to discharge the same but being curious to see if the gun pointed at us lifted up the scuttle and my Chief Mate (Peter Collins) being prepared with a small arm, shott the slave dead that pointed the swivel gun and he fell."

Acts of violence on slave ships were not uncommon, but this is one of the more famous accounts. Between 1600 and 1850, 945 of the 1,608 voyages to west Africa started in Rhode Island.³ They often purchased enslaved people using rum or other products. How did this type of work support the Triangular Trade?

² Transcription provided by Jennifer Galpern, Rhode Island Historical Society.

³ Joanne Pope Melish, "Rhode Island, Slavery, and the Slave Trade," EnCompass, Rhode Island Historical Society, accessed October 10, 2022. <https://library.providence.edu/encompass/rhode-island-slavery-and-the-slave-trade/rhode-island-slavery-and-the-slave-trade/>.

Triangular Trade Primary Source Packet (Con't)

SOURCE THREE

Lithograph, William Clark, *Interior of a Boiling House*, c. 1833

John Carter Brown Library (75-199-5)

<https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCB~1~1~2013~3100005:Interior-of-a-boiling-house>

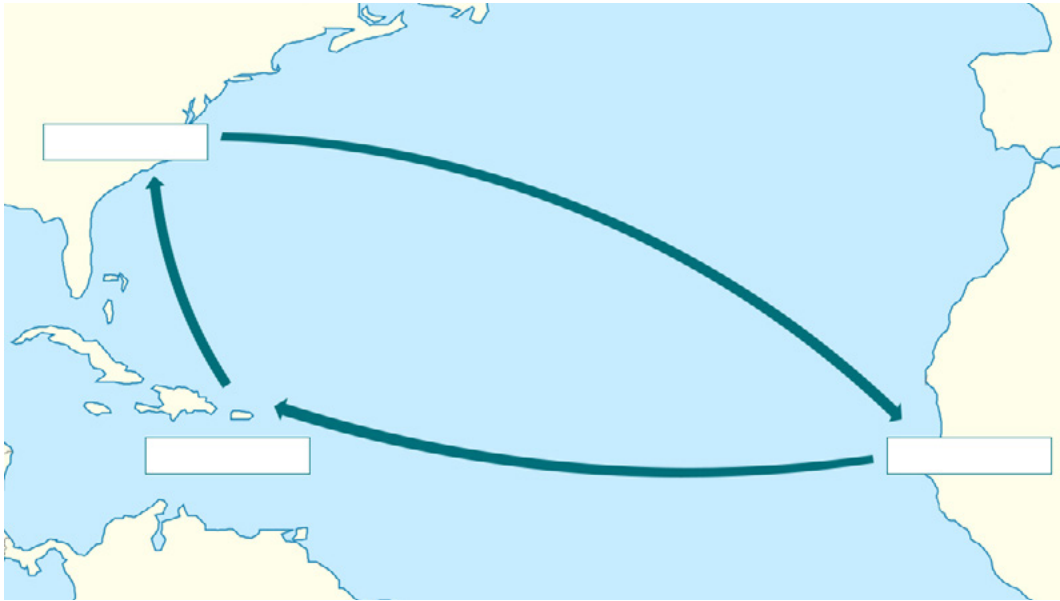
This lithograph was made by William Clark, who witnessed this industry firsthand on the Caribbean island of Antigua. Use this source to consider the role the sugar industry in the West Indies played in the Triangular Trade and the rum trade.



William Clark (the artist) lived in the Caribbean islands during the 1820s and created scenes like this to represent the process of sugar-making, the same process that also created the molasses that was used in making rum. How did this type of work support the Triangular Trade?

Triangular Trade Comparison Activity

Label each stop and each arrow on the map below. Then, analyze the source you were assigned by answering the following questions in complete sentences. Your group members have sources from different legs of the Triangular Trade, so prepare to share your answers with your group.



What are five key details that you notice from your source that help to explain the map?

How is the role of your leg of the Triangular Trade represented by your source?

How do the activities in your source support the other two legs of the Triangular Trade?

After you share with your group, what questions do you still have about the Triangular Trade system?

Molasses Act of 1733 Activity

An Act of Parliament Passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of His Majesty King George the Second, 1733 (Molasses Act of 1733)
Massachusetts Historical Society

https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=212

Read the following excerpt from the Molasses Act of 1733 and then answer the question below.

Your Majesty the severall and respective Rates and Duties herein after mentioned, and in such Manner and Form, as is herein after expressed; and do most humbly beseech Your Majesty that it may be enacted, and be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by Authority of the same, That from and after the Twenty-fifth Day of *December*, One thousand seven hundred and thirty three, there shall be raised, levied, collected, and paid, unto and for the Use of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, upon all Rum or Spirits of the Produce or Manufacture of any of the Colonies or Plantations in *America*, not in the Possession or under the Dominion of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, which, at any Time or Times within or during the Continuance of this Act, shall be imported or brought into any of the Colonies or Plantations in *America*, which now are, or hereafter may be, in the Possession or under the Dominion of His Majesty, His Heirs, or Successors, the Sum of Nine pence, Money of *Great Britain*, to be paid according to the Proportion and Value of Five shillings and Six pence the Ounce in Silver, for
A a a a every

After 25 Dec. 1733. 5 s. per Gallon to be paid for Rum and Spirits made in the *American* Plantations not belonging to His Majesty, on Importation into the *British* Plantations,

Reading hint:

The "Long s" or "f" symbol was common in documents in the 1600s and 1700s to replace the soft "s" sound in many words, especially in words with two s's in a row. Pronounce it as a normal "s" sound.

1733. *Anno Regni Regis GEORGII II. Sexto.*

160 Encouraging the Trade of the *British* Sugar Colonies.

and 6d. per every Gallon thereof, and after that Rate for any greater or lesser Quantity; and upon all Molasses or Syrups of such Foreign Produce or Manufacture, as aforesaid, which shall be imported or brought into any of the said Colonies or Plantations of or belonging to His Majesty, the Sum of Six pence of like Money, for every Gallon thereof, and after that Rate for any greater or lesser Quantity; and upon all Sugars and Paneles of such Foreign Growth, Produce or Manufacture, as aforesaid, which shall be imported into any of the said Colonies or Plantations of or belonging to His Majesty, a Duty after the Rate of Five shillings, of like Money, for every Hundred Weight, *Avoirdupois*, of the said Sugar and Paneles, and after that Rate for a greater or lesser Quantity.

5 s. per c. wt.

How do you think the New England merchants who sold molasses or the distillers who made rum would respond to the Molasses Act of 1733? Would it make them more or less likely to be upset with British policies? Why do you think so?

Molasses Act of 1733 Activity (Modern Text)

An Act of Parliament Passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of His Majesty King George the Second, 1733 (Molasses Act of 1733)
Massachusetts Historical Society

https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=212

Read the following excerpt from the Molasses Act of 1733 and then answer the question below.

Molasses Act of 1733 (original text using modern letters)

Your Majesty the several and respective Rates and Duties [tax] herein after mentioned, and in such Manner and Form, as is herein after expressed; and do most humbly beseech [ask] Your Majesty that it may be enacted, and be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal [on Earth], and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by Authority of the same, That from and after the Twenty-fifth Day of December, One thousand seven hundred and thirty three, there shall be raised, levied, collected, and paid, unto and for the Use of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, upon all Rum or Spirits of the Produce or Manufacture of any of the Colonies or Plantations in America, not in the Possession or under the Dominion of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, which at any Time or Times within or during the Continuance of this Act, shall be imported or brought into any of the Colonies or Plantations in America, which now are, or hereafter may be, in the Possession or under the Dominion of His Majesty, His Heirs, or Successors, the Sum of Nine pence, Money of Great Britain, to be paid according to the Proportion and Value of Five shillings and Six pence the Ounce in Silver for every Gallon thereof, and after that Rate for any greater or lesser Quantity; and upon all Molasses or Syrups of such Foreign Produce or Manufacture, as aforesaid, which shall be imported or brought into any of the said Colonies or Plantations of or belonging to His Majesty, the Sum of Six pence of like Money, for every Gallon thereof, and after that Rate for any greater or lesser Quantity; and upon all Sugars and Paneles of such Foreign Growth, Produce or Manufacture, as aforesaid, which shall be imported into any of the said Colonies or Plantations of or belonging to His Majesty, a Duty after the Rate of Five shillings, of like Money, for every Hundred Weight, Avoirdupois [unit of measurement], of the said Sugar and Paneles, and after that Rate for a greater or lesser Quantity.

How do you think the New England merchants who sold molasses or the distillers who made rum would respond to the Molasses Act of 1733? Would it make them more or less likely to be upset with British policies? Why do you think so?

Molasses Act of 1733 Activity (Condensed)

An Act of Parliament Passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of His Majesty King George the Second, 1733 (Molasses Act of 1733)
Massachusetts Historical Society

https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=212

Read the following excerpt from the Molasses Act of 1733 and then answer the question below.

Molasses Act of 1733 (condensed summary of the original text)

A new tax has been enacted [created] by the King with the advice of the House of Lords and House of Commons [Parliament] on December 25, 1733. This tax will be collected and paid to the King, his heirs and successors. The tax will be collected on rum or spirits that have been produced for or imported [brought into] to the British colonies or plantations from non-British lands in America any time while this tax act is in place. These items are now on lands which belong to the King, his heirs and his successors and are subject to his tax. The tax also applies to molasses that is produced by foreign powers and is imported into the colonies that belong to the British Crown [the King, his heirs, and successors].

How do you think the New England merchants who sold molasses or the distillers who made rum would respond to the Molasses Act of 1733? Would it make them more or less likely to be upset with British policies? Why do you think so?
