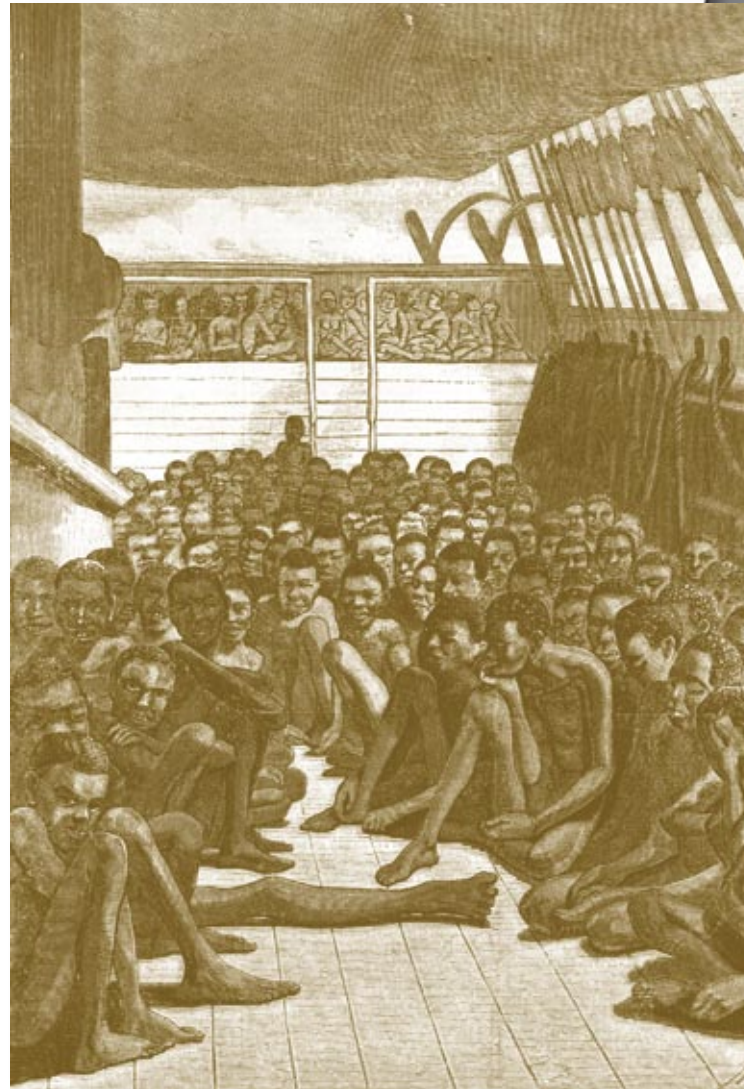


Slavery in the New World

It was hard work settling new land, so the colonists decided to use Africans to work on their tobacco and cotton plantations (plan-TAY-shuhns). In the fall of 1619, Jamestown governor George Yeardley traded a ship full of food for 60 Africans. He purchased them to work on the tobacco plantations. Since these people had been baptized during the voyage, they were considered Christians, and this meant that they could not be slaves. Instead, they were indentured servants (in-DEN-shured SIR-vuhntz) and had to work on a plantation for about seven years to earn their freedom.

Soon after, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade started. Slave traders grew wealthy by sending British and colonial ships to Africa and picking up human captives. These men, women, and children, who had been kidnapped from their homes, were loaded onto ships and taken to the colonies. They were not baptized and were therefore considered sub-human.

The trip across the ocean on the slave ships was called the Middle Passage. The slave traders were greedy and wanted to make as much money as possible. They packed far too many people onto their ships and did not provide them with enough food or water. Many Africans died during the horrific journey.





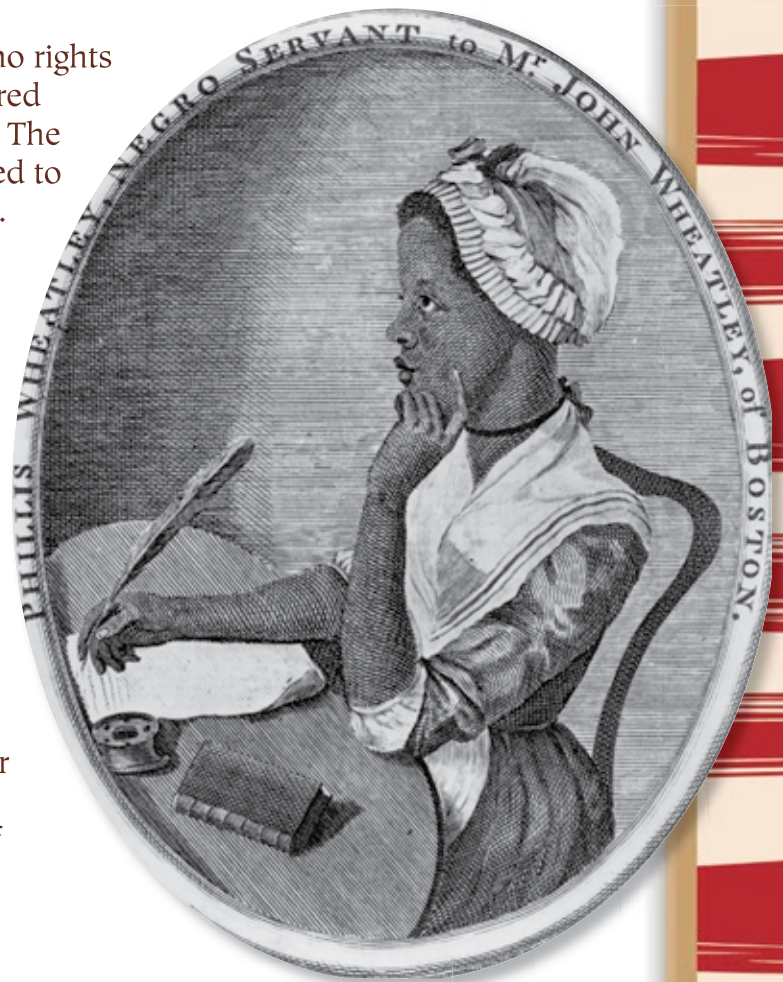
From Africa to the Plantation

After the ships reached the colonies, the traders sold their captives, most frequently at auctions (AUK-shuhnz). Landowners bid on the captives. Whoever bid the most money owned the new slave. Each individual was bid on separately, and this meant that families were often split up. Different people could purchase husbands and wives, parents and children! They might never see each other again.

The slaves had difficult lives with no rights and no choices. Slaves were considered property, just like pieces of furniture. The owners could do whatever they wanted to them and could sell them at any time. Slave families never knew how long they would stay together.

Even with these challenges, Africans made important contributions to early America. Phillis Wheatley wrote beautiful poetry about life in the North. Benjamin Banneker contributed to the design and layout of Washington, D.C.

By 1860, there were four million slaves in the United States. Few were granted freedom, and even fewer bought their freedom. It took almost 200 years and a war to rid America of slavery.



Comprehension Question

In what ways did the Africans positively affect change in the colonies?