The Middle Passage



Name _____ Date _____

1 Recall, then make a connection.

Start from memory. Write a meaning or quick example for each term.

Forced migration	Dehumanization	Agency

Explain how an archive can document forced migration while also exposing dehumanization in its records. What evidence could help preserve the agency of the enslaved people represented?

Context for the task

The Middle Passage was the forced transatlantic transportation of enslaved African people to the Americas. It was part of a system of violence and exploitation that connected traders, states, investors, and plantation economies. Enslaved people were human beings with families, languages, knowledge, and lives; commercial records often obscured that humanity by treating them as property.

2 Organize the records.

What does the record answer?

These are paraphrased source types. Classify their main contribution without assuming any one source is complete.

Sort the source descriptions.

A. Commercial or administrative perspective
B. Personal experience or resistance

Write the category letter beside each record.

1. ___ A shipping account records a vessel's route and expenses.

2. ___ A formerly enslaved person describes separation from family.

3. ___ An official register classifies people as property.

4. ___ A testimony describes efforts to maintain relationships under coercion.

5. ___ A legal petition challenges an individual's enslavement.

Evidence, application & transfer.



3 Read the evidence closely.

Challenge the silent archive

Claim: "Because a commercial ledger says little about families, family relationships did not matter."

Select all evidence or reasoning that challenges the claim.

A. A formerly enslaved person's account describes family separation and its consequences.

B. The ledger's purpose was financial accounting, not recording every human relationship.

C. The ledger gives the ship's name.

D. The account lists the date of departure.

Selections: _____ Explain your reasoning:

4 Apply the idea.

How did a law sustain the system?

Source summary: Virginia's 1662 law made a child's status as enslaved or free follow the mother's status. In a colonial system increasingly organized around racial slavery, a child of an enslaved woman therefore inherited enslavement. This is a paraphrase of a documented law, not a fictional case.

Which explanation connects racialized institutions with denial of rights?

A. The law helped reproduce a racialized system of coerced labor across generations by denying children of enslaved women a free choice or an ordinary route to freedom.

B. The law established a voluntary contract that each child could accept or reject.

C. Because the rule was written into law, it proved that inherited enslavement was fair.

My choice: _____ Explain why it fits:

5 Carry the idea forward.

Write an archive note explaining one reason for and one consequence of forced transatlantic migration. Connect the Virginia law with the way racialized institutions denied freedom. Analyze the limitation of a commercial record and explain how another source could broaden the account.