Name: _____

Date: _____

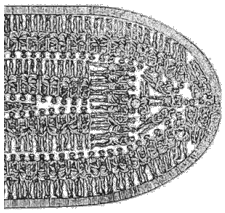
Maafa: Slavery and the Colonization of Africa

Before 1820, nearly four of every five people who crossed the Atlantic to North and South America and the Caribbean were African, and they crossed in chains. Most were sent to sugar plantations, where so many people died that planters chose to replace them with more captives from Africa. Maafa is a Kiswahili word meaning "disaster." It names the five centuries in which Europeans carried Africans into slavery and then seized the continent itself.

Gold and Captives

By the 1440s, Portuguese ships had reached the West African civilizations south of the Sahara Desert. The captains came for gold, but African merchants offered to sell them captives. As large plantations developed in the Americas by the 1600s, demand for captives grew, and millions of people were taken from their homes and sold into slavery.

The Passage



The voyage across the Atlantic lasted six to ten weeks. The captives were held below deck, the men chained at the wrist and ankle. On many ships the decks were less than three feet apart, so no one could sit up. The captives lay there sixteen hours a day, and all day when storms closed the hatches. Dysentery and other diseases spread quickly, and the crew threw the dead into the sea. Those who refused to eat were force-fed. On about one voyage in ten, they rose against the crew. Nearly two million people died before reaching land. The survivors were auctioned, mostly in Brazil and the Caribbean, but also in North America.

Abolition

The slave trade reached its height in the late 1700s, but remained enormous through the 1820s. Religious leaders and prominent writers began to call for the abolition of slavery. In Haiti, enslaved people rose up, drove out the slaveholders, and won independence in 1804. The United States banned slave imports in 1808, but slavery lasted there until 1865, in Cuba until 1886, and in Brazil until 1888.

The Scramble for Africa

As the slave trade ended, European nations colonized more of Africa. Their factories needed rubber, cotton, and copper, and Africa had all three. In 1880, Europeans ruled about one-tenth of the continent, mostly along the coast. In 1884, their leaders met in Berlin to agree on rules for dividing the rest. No African was invited. The borders Europeans drew split some peoples apart and forced rivals together. By 1914, Europeans claimed all of Africa except Liberia and Ethiopia, which had defeated an Italian army in 1896.

The End of Colonialism

Colonialism ended quickly in most of Africa after World War II. Two world wars left Europe with little money to hold distant colonies. Many African leaders had studied at Western universities and returned home determined to end foreign rule. They took heart from Mohandas Gandhi, whose campaign ended British rule in India in 1947. When the British colony of Gold Coast won independence in 1957, its new government took the name of an ancient African empire, Ghana. In 1960, seventeen more colonies became independent.

In South Africa and what is now Zimbabwe, the descendants of European settlers ruled despite being a small part of the population. Both nations denied their Black majorities an equal say in government, Zimbabwe until 1980 and South Africa until 1994. That year, South Africans of every race voted together for the first time, and Nelson Mandela, who had spent twenty-seven years in prison for opposing the government, became president. His election ended the last white minority government in Africa, more than five centuries after the first Portuguese ships arrived.

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Fill in the Blanks

When P__r__u__u__se ships arrived south of the S__h__ra Desert in the 1440s, the c__p__a__ns came for gold, but African merchants offered to sell them c__p__i__es. The captives c__o__s__d the A__l__n__ic Ocean chained on a v__y__ge that lasted s__x to t__n weeks, as d__s__as__s spread quickly. Nearly two m__l__i__n of the captives died before reaching land. In H__i__i, enslaved people rose up and won i__d__p__nd__n__e in 18____, but slavery lasted in the U__i__ed S__a__es until 18____ and in B__a__il until 18____. As the slave trade ended, European nations c__l__n__z__d more of Africa, which had the r__b__er, cotton, and c__p__er their f__c__o__i__s needed. By 1914, European nations claimed all of Africa except L__b__r__a and E__h__o__ia. Colonialism ended quickly in most of Africa after W__r__d War II, and in 19____, G__ld C__a__t won independence from ★B__i__a__n and took the name G__a__a. The last white m__n__r__ty government in Africa ended in 19____, when South Africans of every race elected Nelson M__n__e__a president.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. Why did demand for captives from Africa grow in the Americas?

_____

_____

_____

2. What factors led to the end of slavery?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Why was Haiti the first nation in the Americas to end slavery?

_____

_____

_____

★4. The article ends by saying Mandela's election came more than five centuries after the first Portuguese ships arrived. Why do you think the author connected those two events?

_____

_____

_____

_____

★ This is a higher order learning problem. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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