

PASSAGE TO THE NEW WORLD

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A compilation of images, from 1764, illustrates what Africans endured at the hands of slavers. "Marche D'esclaves" means "slave market," and this is plate XI from *Le Commerce de l'Amerique par Marseille* by M. Chambon. See the link, at the top right of this chapter's Media Stream, to learn <u>more about the specific images</u>. Many historians have described what it *must* have been like for kidnapped Africans to sail across the Atlantic. Olaudah Equiano tells us what it *was* like:

• Children were <u>kidnapped</u> from their homes, often when their parents were not there. A similar event happened to Olaudah and his sister. He was eleven years old.

• At some point, before he sailed, Equiano was <u>separated</u> from his sister. It was a frightening <u>event</u> for both of them.

- The first time the young lad set eyes on a slave ship, he was terrified.
- He thought he was brought on board to be <u>eaten</u> by the white men:

When I looked round the ship too and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted my fate and quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted...I asked if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces and long hair?

• Since he did not live on the African coast, and had never seen a ship, Equiano thought sailing happened by



magic.

- Conditions on board ship were <u>so bad</u> he would have jumped overboard had he been able.
- Equiano <u>learned</u> he would be taken far away to work for the white men in their country.
- During the crossing, the stench below deck, nearly unbearable on the coast, became "pestilential."
- Many of the kidnapped Africans <u>thought</u> death was preferable to living on a slave ship.

• Some of the captives jumped into the water, committing suicide. More would have followed had the crew not stopped them.

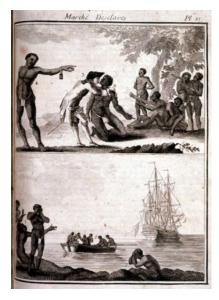
- Equiano's ship <u>arrived</u> in Barbados.
- He, and the other captured Africans, were <u>sold</u> as slaves on the Caribbean island.

<u>Olaudah Equiano</u> spent many years <u>at sea</u> as the slave of a naval man. Although he became a freeman in 1766, for the sum of 40 pounds sterling, <u>he</u> never saw his parents or sister again.

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