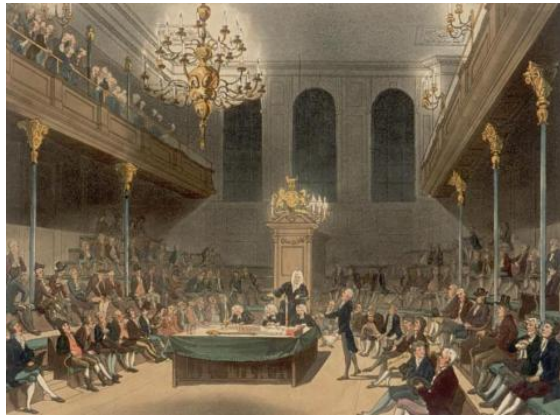




0. SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED - FEBRUARY 23, 1807 -
Story Preface

1. AFRICA, BEFORE SLAVERS

2. SLAVE-TRADE BEGINNINGS

3. THE TRIANGLE TRADE

4. THE MIDDLE PASSAGE MYTH

5. MIDDLE PASSAGE REALITY

6. JOHN NEWTON, SLAVE TRADER

7. OLAUDAH EQUIANO

8. HUMANS: PROPERTY and AUCTIONS

9. WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

10. VOICE of a MOVEMENT

11. MASSIVE EXPLOITATION

12. THE FAMOUS SPEECH

13. CONVINCING the PUBLIC

**14. SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED - FEBRUARY 23,
1807**

15. MORE TRAGEDIES

16. AMAZING GRACE

The House of Commons, in London's Westminster, as it appeared during the time of William Wilberforce. This drawing was created by Augustus Pugin and Thomas Rowlandson for *Ackermann's Microcosm of London* (1808-11). The Commons chamber, as seen here, was destroyed by an 1834 fire. Online, via Wikimedia Commons.

Three years after William Wilberforce made his first anti-slave-trade speech, members of Parliament decided they would gradually abolish the practice.

The law did not change.

Wilberforce, and his abolitionist colleagues—black and white—continued their efforts, enduring newspaper attacks, physical assaults and death threats. William had to travel with an armed bodyguard.

The law did not change.

As members of the public grew more concerned about the slave trade, they boycotted sugar, signed petitions and marched on the Prime Minister's office.

The law did not change.

In 1796, abolitionists believed enough members of Parliament were finally ready to pass the bill. Obviously concerned, slave-trade proponents offered certain MPs free tickets to the opera. Perhaps those who enjoyed the performance the night of the vote were not-yet ready to abandon human trafficking. The bill failed by four votes.

The law did not change.

Exhausted, Wilberforce had a nervous breakdown. His friend, John Newton, encouraged him to keep his focus and ignore those who were set against him:

[T]he God whom you serve continually is able to preserve and deliver you, he will see you through.

Eighteen years after he first raised the issue, Wilberforce put another bill before Parliament. It was the 23rd of February, 1807. As he listened to the debate, William sensed momentum was now in favor of abolishing the slave-trade law. At 4:00 a.m., the House of Commons voted.

The law changed - by a vote of 283 to 16.

Wilberforce bowed his head and wept.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SLAVE-TRADE-ABOLISHED-FEBRUARY-23-1807-Abolishing-the-Slave-Trade-William-Wilberforce>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/SLAVE-TRADE-ABOLISHED-FEBRUARY-23-1807-Abolishing-the-Slave-Trade-William-Wilberforce>

Questions 2 Ponder

Should a Change of Law Be Gradual or Abrupt?

Wilberforce, and his abolitionist colleagues—black and white—continued their efforts to convince Members of Parliament to abolish the slave-trade law. Enduring newspaper attacks, physical assaults and death threats, Wilberforce had to travel with an armed bodyguard.

As the public began to turn in favor of abolishing the law, people boycotted sugar, signed petitions and marched on the Prime Minister's office.

In 1796, when it seemed momentum had shifted in favor of slave-trade abandonment, slave-trade proponents offered certain MPs free tickets to the opera. The law did not change, and Wilberforce had a nervous breakdown.

Finally, at 4 o'clock in the morning - on the 23rd of February, 1807 - the law changed by a vote of 283 to 16. Wilberforce, who was present, bowed his head and wept.

Do you see parallels between abolishing the slave-trade law and legal issues which are hot topics in the 21st century? Explain your answer.

Do you think it is better to change a law gradually or abruptly? Explain your position.

Do you think the more controversial the law the greater the need for a public-relations effort? Why, or why not?

Media Stream



SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED - FEBRUARY 23, 1807

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/SLAVE-TRADE-ABOLISHED-FEBRUARY-23-1807>

Amazing Grace - Parliament Abolishes the Slave Trade

Amazing Grace - 2006 Film by Bristol Bay Productions

Directed by:

Michael Apted

Produced by:

Terrence Malick

Patricia Heaton

David Hunt

Edward R. Pressman

Ken Wales

Written by:

Steven Knight

Starring:

Ioan Gruffudd

Albert Finney

Music by:

David Arnold

Cinematography by:

Remi Adefarasin

Distributed by:

IDP, Samuel Goldwyn Films

Release dates:

September 16, 2006 - premiere

February 23, 2007 - US

March 23, 2007 - UK

Running time:

118 minutes

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Amazing-Grace-Parliament-Abolishes-the-Slave-Trade>

