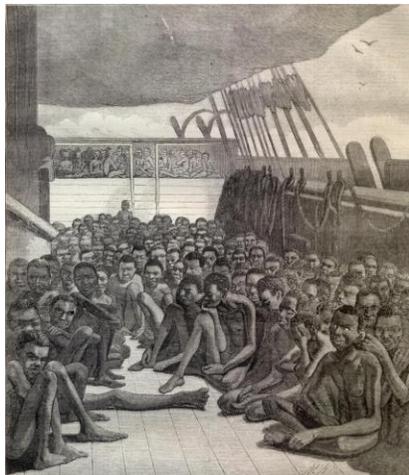


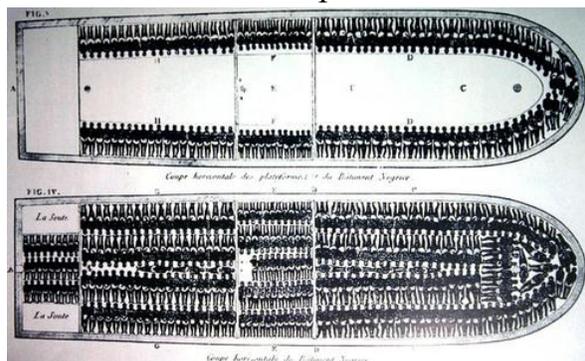
The Middle Passage

Eighteenth Century

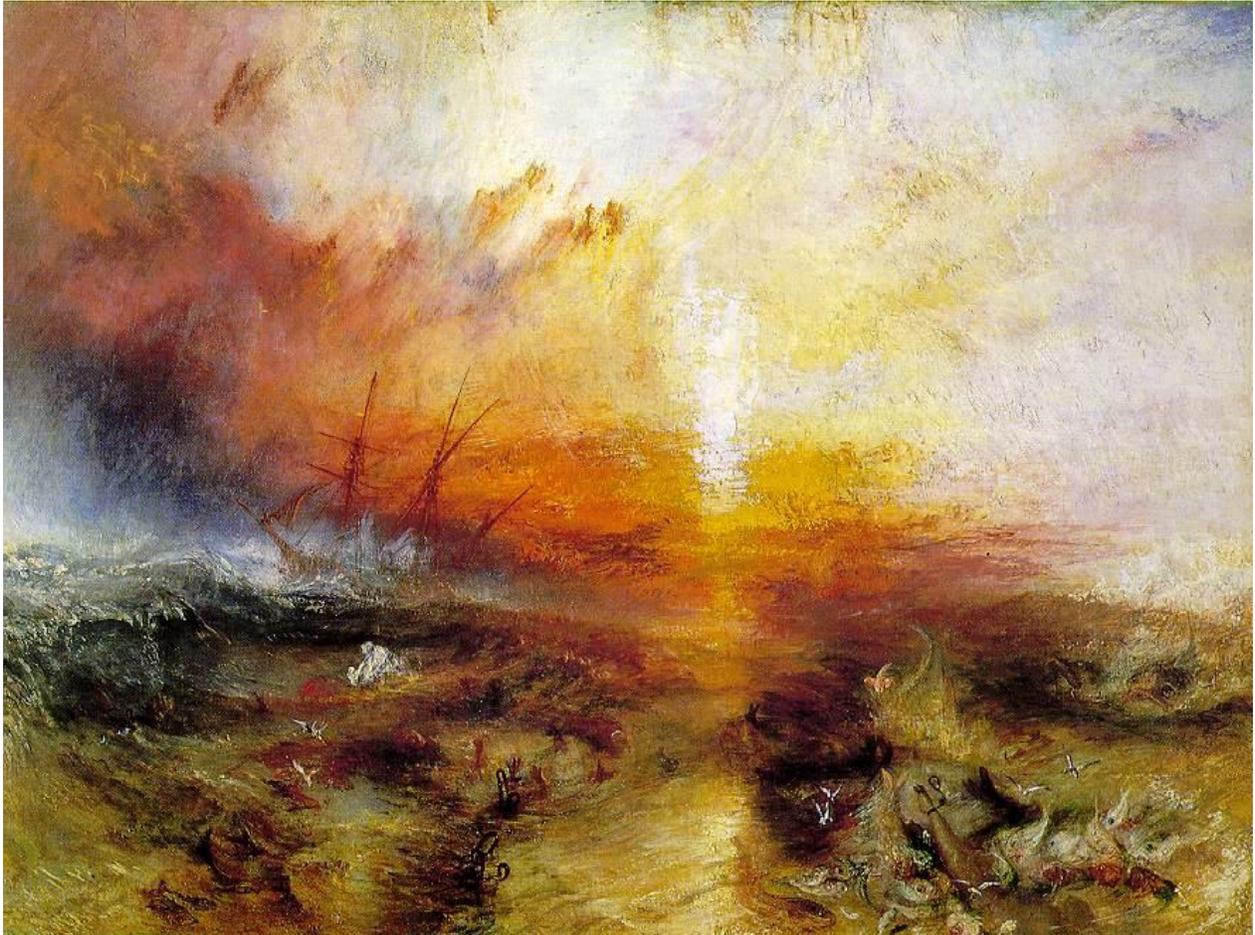


The Middle Passage involved the forced transportation of Africans from Africa to the New World. The Africans were kidnapped from their homelands as part of the Atlantic slave trade. The Middle Passage was also one of the main components of the triangular trade voyage. Triangular trade was a three-way trade between West Africa, Europe, the West Indies, and the northern colonies of British North America. The Middle Passage was the sea lane that went to the western side of Africa. The ships for the Middle Passage left from Europe to go to the African markets. Here, they would either trade or sell their goods to the inhabitants of the region. In exchange, they got prisoners or people who had been kidnapped in Africa. After this exchange, the ships proceeded to North America, South America, and the Caribbean. Here the prisoners and kidnapped victims would be traded or sold in exchange for goods that would be very useful in the European markets. After this, the ships made their way back to Europe. The main countries involved in this process included Spain, Portugal, England, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Brandenburg, the North American colonies, and Brazil.

The Middle Passage journey was extremely rough. It would take approximately one to six months depending on the weather conditions. African kings, warlords, or people hired to kidnap Africans would sell the prisoners to Europeans who came to African coast for trade. The Africans were forced to march to the coast, sold, and packed tightly on board the slave ships. In some cases hundreds of Africans were packed into tiny rooms below the ship's surface. The men would be chained together to fit as many people as possible. The women and children were given just a little room to move on board. The Africans were given a small meal with water once a day. The meals consisted of yams, rice, corn, and palm oil. The slave ship's crew received food first, leaving the Africans to eat what was left.



Somewhere between 9.4 million and 12 million Africans were transported to the New World. This was a significantly smaller number than the Africans who began the trip. Many Africans died on the ships due disease and starvation. In particular, dysentery and scurvy caused the majority of deaths. Other diseases were measles, malaria, and smallpox. The potential for African deaths increased when weather was bad, and ships were delayed. With the time of the passage extended, food and water ran low, causing mass starvation and increasing malnutrition. The emotional well-being of the Africans also was affected. They became depressed about separation from their families and their impending enslavement in a new world. They lost their freedom, were treated badly, and physically abused. Those who could not endure the hardships committed suicide. Some jumped overboard and drowned.



The Slave Ship
(Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying)
Joseph Turner, 1840

