

Slavery Primary Sources
How did the sugar industry affect the lives of African slaves?

Source 1: Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa (London 1788)*.
(Falconbridge was a British surgeon who made 4 trips to the Americas on slave ships before he became opposed to the slave trade.)

[Falconbridge describes a method of slave sales called a "scramble".]

The mode of selling them by scramble having fallen under my observation the oftenest, I shall be more particular in describing it. Being some years ago, at one of the islands in the West Indies, I was witness to a sale by scramble, where about 250 Negroes were sold. Upon this occasion all the Negroes scrambled for bear an equal price; which is agreed upon between the captains and the purchasers before the sale begins. On a day appointed, the Negroes were landed and placed together in a large yard belonging to the merchants to whom the ship was consigned. As soon as the hour agreed on arrived, the doors of the yard were suddenly thrown open and in rushed a considerable number of purchasers, with all the ferocity of brutes. Some instantly seized such of the Negroes as they could conveniently lay hold of with their hands. Others being prepared with several handkerchiefs tied together, encircled as many as they were able. While others, by means of a rope, effected the same purpose. It is scarcely possible to describe the confusion of which this mode of selling is productive. It likewise causes much animosity among the purchasers who not infrequently fall out and quarrel with each other. The poor astonished Negroes were so terrified by these proceedings, that several of them, through fear climbed over the walls of the courtyard and ran wild about the town, but were soon hunted down and retaken....

Source 2: Importation and Population Statistics for the British West Indies in the 18th Century.

Year	Barbados: Slave Imports	Barbados: Total Black Population	Jamaica: Slave Imports	Jamaica: Total Black Population	Leeward Islands: Slave Imports	Leeward Islands: Total Black Population
1640- 1650	18,700		?		2,000	
1670		30,000		7,000		3,000
1651- 1675	51,100		8,000		10,100	
1680		50,000		15,000		9,000
1676- 1700	64,700		77,100		32,000	
1713		45,000		55,000		30,000

Source 3: Richard Lignon, *The True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados, 1673.*

The canes with their tops or blades, do commonly grow to be eight foot high. The manner of cutting them is with little hand bills, about six inches from the ground; at which time they divide the tops from the canes, which they do with the same bills, at one stroke; and then holding the canes by the upper end, they strip off all the blades that grow by the sides of the canes, which tops and blades are bound up in bundles, and put into carts, to carry home. The place where they unload, is a little platform of ground, which is contiguous to the mill house, done about with a double rail to keep the canes from falling out of that room; where one, or two, or more make a stop there, are ready to unload them, and so turning them back again, they go immediately to the field, and there to take in fresh loading; so that they may not unjustly be compared to bees...

The manner of grinding them, is this, the horses and cattle being put to their tackle, they go about, and by their force turn (by their sweeps) the middle roller; which being cogged to the other two, at both ends, turn them about. A Negro puts in the canes of one side, and the rollers draw them through to the other side, where another Negro stands, and receives them, and returns them back on the other side of the middle roller, which draws the other way. So having passed twice through, that is forth and back, it is conceived all the juice is pressed out. There are young Negro girls that carry them away and lay them on a heap where they make a large hill... And so the work goes on from Monday morning at one o'clock, till Saturday night (at which time the fire in the furnaces are put out) all hours of the day and night, with fresh supplies of men, horses, and cattle...

We lost an excellent Negro who, not knowing the force of the liquor he carried, brought the candle somewhat nearer than he ought, that he might better see how to put it into the funnel, which conveyed it into the butt. But the spirit being stirred by that motion, flew out, and got hold of the flame of the candle, and so set all on fire, and burnt the poor Negro to death, who was an excellent servant.