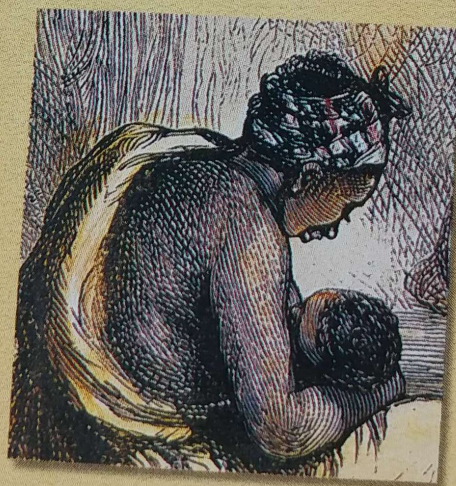




What is happening to this young girl?



What might this mother be thinking?



Why is this man being whipped?

Facing Slavery

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 7, you read about how the British colonies in North America were similar and different. One difference was that southern colonies, such as Georgia and Virginia, depended on the labor of **enslaved Africans**. In this chapter, you will learn about slavery from the point of view of West Africans.

Enslaved Africans responded to many **dilemmas**. A dilemma arises when you are forced to make a decision even though you do not like any of the choices. For hundreds of years, the slave trade forced West Africans to face dilemmas that changed their lives forever.

Beginning in the late 1400s, kingdoms and villages in West Africa had to decide whether to trade enslaved people for European guns and other goods. You will read about how difficult this decision was. Once they were enslaved, Africans had to find a way to survive in gruesome ships that took them across the Atlantic Ocean. This voyage was known as the **Middle Passage**. Finally, when Africans arrived in North America, they had to respond to their new life as slaves.

Look at the illustration below. As you learn about each dilemma that Africans faced during the slave trade, think about how each stage along the voyage took enslaved people farther and farther from their homes.

Three Dilemmas Faced by Enslaved Africans



8.2 West Africa in the 1500s

The region known as West Africa lies on the continent of Africa, just above the equator. To the north is the Sahara Desert. To the west and the south is the Atlantic Ocean. Most of West Africa is covered by grassland or rain forest.

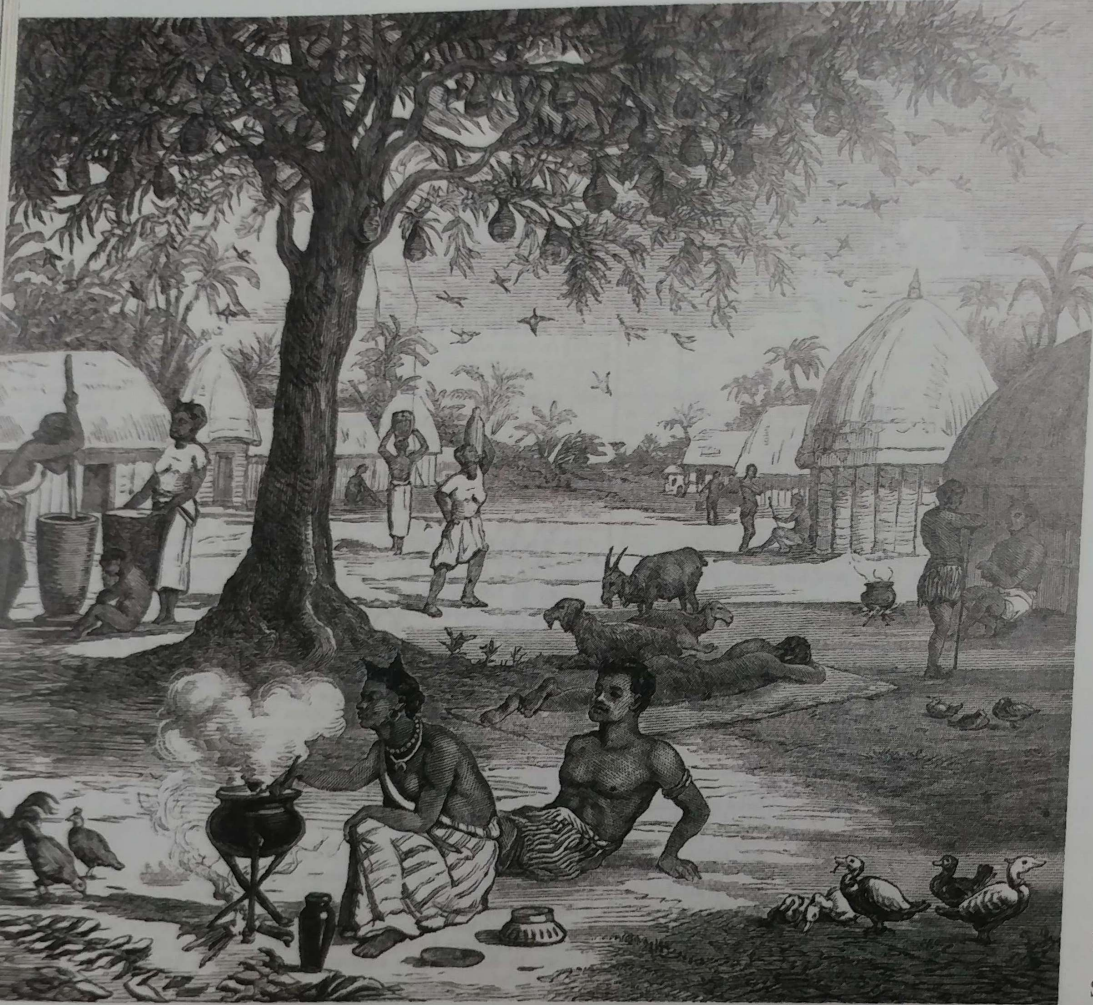
In the 1500s, people of many cultures lived in West Africa. In many ways the West Africans were alike. Most people farmed. Some were also miners, craftspeople, or traders. Caravans of camels carried gold and ivory from West Africa to countries north of the Sahara Desert. In return, West Africans received salt, cloth, and other goods.

Throughout West Africa, society was based on the family. Parents, grandparents, and cousins all lived in the same village. They owned the land together and shared their crops. They also worshipped the spirits of their ancestors, singing chants and dancing to ask the spirits to protect them. Another common tradition was storytelling. Fables, legends, and myths

helped people learn about their culture and history.

West Africans were also different in many ways. Some lived in small villages, while others lived in large cities, such as Timbuktu. Some villages and cities were part of big empires. The people of West Africa spoke many languages. Often people from different villages could not understand one another.

Most West Africans in the 1500s lived in freedom. But that was about to change as more and more slave traders from Europe arrived during that century.



Here is an illustration showing daily life in a West African village. A couple cook over a fire while other people relax or do other tasks.

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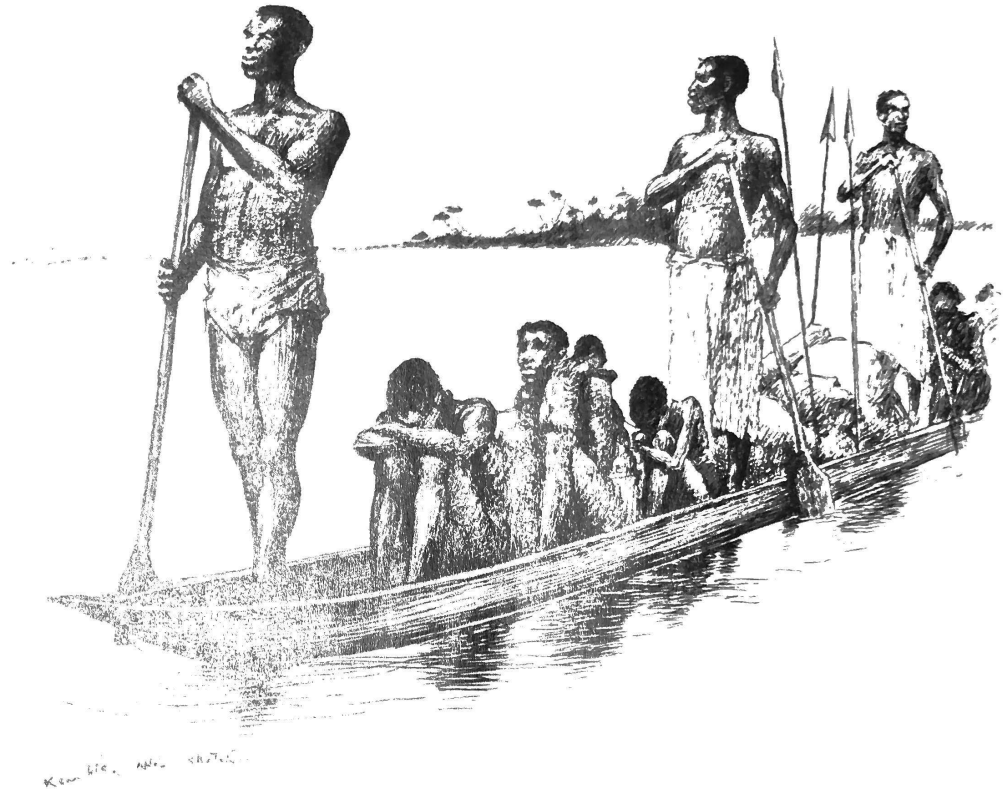
8.3 Dilemma: The European Slave Trade in West Africa

When the European traders arrived, they saw that some people in West Africa were not as free as others. These people were servants or workers. Some of them had been captured during wars. Some had been found guilty of crimes. Some were even sold as slaves by other West Africans to Arab traders.

The Europeans called all these people “slaves.” But their lives were very different from the lives that slaves would have in North America. Many of them became part of the larger family in the village. They did not have all the rights that other people in the village had, but they could own land and farm. They could become skilled workers and earn money. Most of them could gain their freedom one day through work or marriage.

The European traders introduced a new kind of slavery. Europeans had started huge sugar and tobacco **plantations** in the **Americas**. They needed large numbers of workers on these plantations, and one way to get them was to have slaves. So traders came to West Africa offering cloth, rum, tobacco, and other goods in exchange for slaves. Many Africans became wealthy by trading slaves for goods like these.

The Europeans also offered to trade guns for slaves. This kind of trade changed life in West Africa. A group that traded slaves for guns could begin to threaten its neighbors. Then the neighbors wanted their own guns, so they traded slaves for guns, too. Soon groups all over West Africa were exchanging slaves for guns.



Some West Africans, like those standing in the canoe, captured slaves. Then Europeans traded cloth, rum, guns, and other goods for the slaves.

plantation: a usually large area of privately owned land where crops were grown with the labor of workers or slaves who lived on the land

Americas: the continents of North and South America (connected by Central America), along with nearby islands, like those in the Caribbean Sea

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