



Assistance with University Projects? Research Reports? Writing Skills?

We've got you covered!

www.assignmentstudio.net

WhatsApp: +61-424-295050

Toll Free: 1-800-794-425

Email: contact@assignmentstudio.net

Follow us on Social Media

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/AssignmentStudio>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/AssignmentStudi>

LinkedIn:

<https://au.linkedin.com/company/assignment-studio>

Pinterest:

<http://pinterest.com/assignmentstudi>

“Why was slavery abolished in England? Note: this question requires you to look beyond 21st century views of slavery and to examine the motives of both sides of the Abolitionist debate and to evaluate their arguments in the context of eighteenth-century English society.”

A person is said to be a slave if another person exercises power or control over him with either of the two main factors. One is by restraining their personal liberty; second is by disposing off their labor against their will. Another definition of slavery is when a person, known as a master, has absolute power on another person, known as slave; master has the control over slave's life and liberty [1].

The role of slave and master has been in practice since the beginning of life on earth. Many historians believe that there is no specific era that can be quoted as the origin of slavery. Slavery started with civilization. For hunter-gatherers, slaves were an unaffordable luxury - there would not have been enough food to go round. Those who were defeated in war were taken as slaves. Western slavery goes back 10,000 years to Mesopotamia, today's Iraq, where a male slave was worth an orchard of date palms. Females were primarily used for sexual services and were only released when their master died. Early abolitionists arose in the form of two Jewish sects, the Essenes and the Therapeutae, who abhorred slave-owning and tried buying slaves in order to free them [2]. In the 16th century, Colony of Virginia was founded and it soon became one of the largest slaves' populated areas. Then, Barbados became an English Caribbean colony on England, seizing Jamaica from Spain. The royal African company was formed to relate the English slave trade. Afterwards, the royal African company was exposed, and the slave trade was open to private traders as well.

United Kingdom once ruled the whole world, but the business of enslavement was started far earlier than that. In a very short time, Britons became the leaders in this business. The British slave trade began in 1662, when John Hawkins, the first English slave trader, captured 300 slaves in Sierra Leone. Documentation suggests that the Atlantic slave trade began earlier; however, a Portuguese sailor, named Antam Goncalves, seized ten Africans near Cape Bojador in 1441 [10].

The business of enslavement mostly existed on western African coasts, in the Atlantic shipping lanes and in the slave colonies of America. Yet, as a matter of fact, everyone in the Britain played a part in the business of slavery.

Financial, commercial, legal and insurance institutions emerged to support the lucrative activities of the slavers. Slave trade captain became bankers, plantation owners, stood in parliaments, and many other people related to the business took advantage of the business effectiveness; even industry revolutions were financed on the basis of trade [3].

Greed and power were the two main factors behind this whole business; the rich wanted to get richer and the powerful wanted to become more powerful. One famous family in the slavery business was Beckford Family; they were considered one of the richest and most powerful house families of the 18th century. It all started with Peter Beckford [4] who stepped his feet in Jamaica and set the family on their path to richness. He bought the first plantation on the island, His son followed his father's success, and very soon the family business extended to wine shipping and trading, sugar planting and factoring, money lending and, of course, the ownership of numerous enslaved Africans. As the Beckford family grew in Jamaica, so did their hold on the island. Beckford family played a huge role in promoting the business of enslavement, as they transformed themselves from being an ordinary family to one of the richest of those times; there were of course other factors involved in lending money and sugar planting as well, but enslavement was their main source of earning and growing so fast. This was the business that Britons flourished in a very short span of time, and they grew more and more with the passage of time; within a few years, they were the leaders of taking the slaves from Africa to their destinations. Profit margin was huge, and it was helping them establish their empire in a better and cost-effective manner. Brutality and enforced working for 24/7 were normal things among the elite society at that time.

This was not going to last forever; it was only a matter of time when the slavery abolition would start. No one knew from where it would start, but the Britons knew that something was going to happen. The vital changes that brought the transatlantic trade to an end surprisingly did not start in Europe; instead, it started from the countries where slaves were put to work in plantation system. Slavery abolition movements in Europe, Britain and American played a huge role but they played the auxiliary part in the struggle of the black slaves. Changes that took place in French and American Revolution were alike, both politically and socially. Slavery took a rise in 1791 in Haiti, which led to fight for rights and independence; it was two years after the Revolution in France and became the first success story of slave resistance and independence. Affects were very apparent, as the French revolutionary government abolished slavery in 1794. However, it only last for a certain period of time, as Napoleon restored it in 1802. The final nail in the coffin came in Haiti's 'Black Jacobins' over British invasion, and then Napoleon's attempt to re-take the island in 1803 led recognition of Haiti's independence.[5]

On the other hand, the British Jamaica maroons (warrior groups of escaped slaves) were a constant headache for the colonial government and the planters. It was the revolt of 20,000 in Jamaica in 1831, which provided the platform and a huge cause of concern for the British Empire. It was not only the revolt, but a horrific repression, which influenced the bill of 1833, abolishing slavery itself in all British colonies. The bill was passed in 1833, but it took 5 more years to implement the act after the figure was believed to be 20 Million pounds in compensation to the planters for their loss of property. The abolition of slaves in Britain was formally founded as a national organized campaign in 1787, in the aftermath of the American war of independence. William Wilberforce was their leader in the parliament. Anti-slavery movements in America and Britain took the form of mostly Protestants, Non-conformist Christianity and Radicals; Wilberforce was a radical evangelical Anglican. Abolitionists originally were only a group of few Christians, including Protestants. Then, there was Thomas Clarkson, unlike his friend Wilberforce or the evangelicals; he was a supporter of the French revolution. In many ways, he was the real leader of the movement; but, he is only commemorated by a small plaque in Westminster Abbey, as compared to the large marble statue of Wilberforce. Wilberforce supported repressive legislation, which was introduced by his friend William Pitt, after the outbreak of war with revolutionary France.

Moving on, despite the advancement of socialism and laws, most of the ideas, along with political preferences, were still expressed in a religious form. This included abolitionists, masters as slave owners, traders and investors. The Anglican Church, along with several other Bishops, owned slave plantation in Barbados, among the most brutal in Caribbean. The society that was created for the propagation of Gospel also owned the Codrington plantation on the same island. Their slaves used to have the word “Society” on their chest, like a logo for an organization. Slaves’ objective was clear, and abolishment of slavery was a dream that would ultimately be a reality, but abolition movement motive in Briton remains a debatable topic to date and has variation of views. In the beginning, it was just a moral crusade by a few upper class leaders, but with the addition of political movement and a social base that was helping abolition of slavery just for the cause, they considered slavery a threat to their own liberties. The movement came as the result of a big alliance from small farmers, artisans, exploited workers etc. Most of them were sympathized with egalitarian and democratic ideas from the French revolution and in some cases socialism as well. It was a massive multi-class movement, as different people gathered for different purposes; it was far more than a single issue campaign that had 10000-15000 black people as well, living in London. It is astonishing how details on all this are not available in Wilberforce biopic, *Amazing Grace* [5].

There were economic factors involved as well, which were above the political and social movements. Britain was going through an industry revolution that had caught the eye of the world with its ever increasing speed at that time. The New World plantation system was a highly developed form of slave mode of production that was integrated into and was increasingly driven by a growing capitalist world market. In *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams argued that plantation system and its slave utilization was one of the major factors of the industrial revolution in Britain. However, in the 18th century, the business of enslavement as a whole took a knock, and due to that, the profitability of the plantation system started to decrease. It was not that it just stopped producing goods for Britain, but instead, the industrial and commerce developed even faster, and that was the deal of the time, unlike 16th or 17th century, where the dirt slave business was considered to be ideal.

Some of the historians believed that the imperial competition from the French side was another reason of abolishment. After the loss of Haiti, French welcomed this blow, as they relied more on slavery than Britons. History evidenced that before the revolution in Haiti, France was being provided two third of its foreign earnings by Haiti, which shows that France was more dependent on slavery than industrial Britain. [5]

The abolitionists, after the political instability and economic drawback and later war with France, led to a ruling class of slavery lobby, and their representatives in parliament turned their attention against the measures of slave trade. In May 1806, parliament passed an act, according to which British were banned to do slave trade with France and its allies. “The pro-slavery lobby was outmaneuvered, because the bill was presented as a patriotic war measure, directed against French interests. It was a major blow to the slave trade and it laid ground for the 1807 act of abolition. The Royal Navy’s subsequent campaigns against the international slave trade were presented as a moral crusade by Britain but were much more a form of economic war against its less economically developed competitors.” (Dave Packer) [5]

An alternate view represented by Mike Macnair in *Weekly Worker* states that the evidence does ‘not suggest even a relative decline in the profitability of plantation slavery and the slave trade at the time of the rise of the anti-slavery movement.’ He further continues by saying, ‘We have to set the purely cynical narrative on one side. The 1807 ban on the slave trade was not a cynical maneuver in British capitalist interests. It was a limited concession dragged out of a hostile capitalist establishment by an organized mass campaign.’ After the death of William Pitt and a governmental crisis, the abolitionist made a significant impact on elections. Macnair considers that: ‘The immediate political context made it a little easier to drag this concession out.’ [5]

In 1820, the plantation was still profitable, but British navy was the pain in neck. Replacement at such a large scale was needed, either in shape of stolen labor or slave breeding, but both could not be encouraged, as it was costing time and was quite expensive otherwise as well. Although in the long term it was profitable, which was experienced in the North America and when this system was predominant in the nineteenth century. While in Caribbean, the concept of male slave gang system was far more profitable and brutal, this was predominated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Major ratios of slave deaths due to brutality and overwork demonstrate the time of brutal Roman Empire.

Later, the great reform act took place in 1832, through which mass movement created much collision on public, and the direction on anti-slavery movement was touched and partially changed. Before this act, parliament was dominated by a large number of MPs; it was difficult to prove any agenda or dialogue on the parliament level and was less communicated to the general public. All of it resulted in a much centered place, small London group, majorly in Clapham. After this act, the constituency represents more of common voice. [6]

The abolishment finally succeeded in 1833. To achieve abolition, abolitionists had to compensate on something, but Buxton saw that the issue could be converted into a financial one. Though, he managed British government to compensate on slave owners, the cost was £15 million. Many think that Buxton rewarded slave owners for their weakness, and the planters demanded slaves to complete unpaid apprentices. After negotiating, the radical section of the abolitionist movement saw a compromise with the planters. [6]

Elizabeth Heyrick (1769-1831) is another popular name in the history of abolition of slavery. She was passionate in her hatred of injustice. So, it is perhaps not surprising that she took up the anti-slavery cause. She was a leading light in women’s anti-slavery societies in the 1820s, and she set up the Female Society for Leicester. Whereas the men leading the anti-slavery campaign talked about the ‘gradual’ freeing of the slaves, Elizabeth wanted complete freedom immediately. Other female societies supported her. Elizabeth was a blast of fresh air to the movement. She was a key figure in the organization of a new sugar boycott, repeating the one of the (1790s) which was designed to hit plantation owners hard. She inspired the women’s societies to put out pamphlets, encouraging the boycott and established a national list of everyone who stopped using sugar. She wrote an influential pamphlet in 1824, called “Immediate not Gradual Abolition” [8]. She put pressure on Wilberforce and other leaders by getting all the female societies to refuse to give funds to the main organization, if they would not support immediate freedom for all enslaved people. This was a serious threat, because about a fifth of all donations came from women’s associations. The men gave in [9].

The business of enslavement is one of the darkest truths in the Britons history. It was not that Britons were the only ones; the culture of slaves was already under practice and it had been there since civilization came into being. But, Britons played their part in the 16th and 17th century, when it really took off and took the slaves to another level of slavery, in which masters' orders were not simple; instead, they were for a business. Plantation system was built around the slaves and its every bit of success relied on their hard work; but, we have got to admire the planning and implementation of Britons leaders and how clever they were, as they revolutionized their own industry, even though it came at a heavy cost, as so many slaves lost their lives; even who were living were not in good enough condition. These were the drawbacks of the top management at that time, including parliament leaders and other rich investors, who boosted this business and took full advantage of it for their own good. The main reason why Britons supported slavery was that the transatlantic slave trade produced an enormous amount of wealth for Britain. It made a number of cities very rich, especially Bristol and Liverpool; it even made some individuals very wealthy. It was the main source of income for a large number of people – merchants, sailors, rope manufacturers, ship builders and chandlers, makers of slave chains and manacles, manufacturers of the various goods used to exchange for goods, and so on. So, there was a wide range of powerful vested interests in protecting the trade, which of course included the plantation owners in the West Indies and absentee owners in the Britain.

Britain's ordinary citizens should be praised, as they were the first nation to come out against slavery, and they not only came out; they helped the campaigns against slavery, the movements, and just about every action that went in the favor of abolition of slavery. Without their support, it would not have been possible to abolish the cruel act of slavery. Towns and cities throughout the Britain set up abolition committees to organize the local campaigns. Particularly important were the ones in Manchester, Exeter, Plymouth and Newcastle. There was a whole network of committees that collected money to send to London. They used to make leaflets and give information to the people of the local area, drew up petitions and got them signed, wrote letters to the local newspapers and set up debates. They were led by shopkeepers, grocers, teachers, doctors, vicars and the like [9].

If we put this in a nutshell, we can say that slavery was abolished in England due to the slaves movements and sugar boycott. The business was not as profitable as it was in start of 17th century. French revolution also played its inspiring part and most importantly, it was the leaders like Hannah More, William Wilberforce (controversial but certainly played a key role), the maroons, Elizabeth Heyrick and many unsung heroes who played their part in enforcing the slavery abolition act in 1833 [10].

West Indies suffered a lot, as the wealth and plants were all demolished afterwards, but what they gained was priceless freedom and an end to the cruelest act of humanity, called as master and slave. Formally, slavery was ended, although reality is a bit different.

References:

- | |
|---|
| [1] Definition Lloyd Duhaime, Barrister, Solicitor, Attorney |
| [2] A Brief History Of Slavery Published on August 5, 2001 |
| [3] The Business of Enslavement, By <i>Nigel Pocock and Victoria Cook 2011</i> |
| [4] Big Spenders: The Beckford's and Slavery BY Amy Frost 2007 |
| [5] Why did Britain abolish slavery? <i>Dave Packer 2007</i> |
| [6] Historical Boys' Clothing, <i>Christian Abolitionist Movement: Britain (2010)</i> |
| [7] Dr John Oldfield (2011), <i>British Anti-Slavery</i> |
| [8] Midgley C., Women Against Slavery, The British Campaigns 1780 – 1870, Routledge, 1992, |
| [9] ENDINGSLAVERY: AN UNFINISHED BUSINESS Terry Fiehn 2006 |
| [10] The Anti-Slavery Campaign in Britain Marjie Bloy, Ph. D.-2010 |
| [11] Slavery and the Building of Britain By James Walvin-2011 |
| [12] Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838 Edited by Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, and Sara Salih |