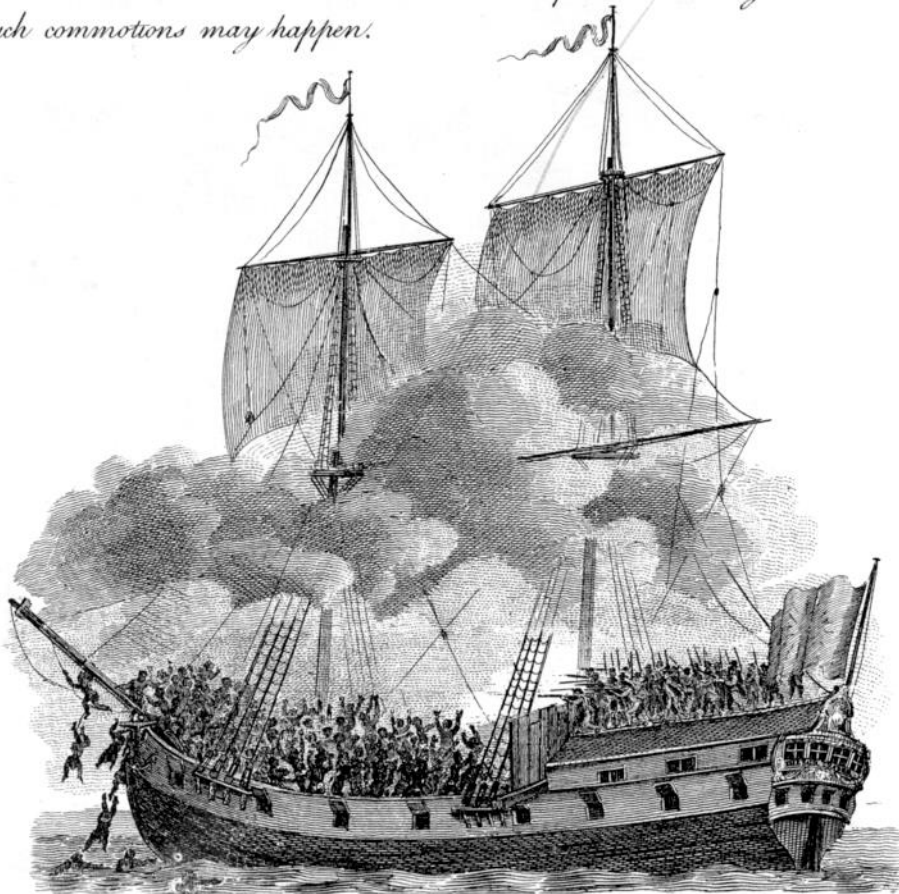


Rebellion, Revolt, and Resistance

REPRESENTATION of an INSURRECTION
on board
A SLAVE SHIP.

Shewing how the crew fire upon the unhappy Slaves from behind the BARRICADO, erected on board all Slave Ships, as a security whenever such commotions may happen.



*See the privy council's report part I. Art: SLAVES.
Minutes of evidence before the House of Commons.
Wadstrom's Essay on Colonization §. 471.*

This resource quotes directly from 18th / early 19th century historical sources and contains language and details about the attitudes towards people who were enslaved and trafficked from Africa during that time which some readers may find upsetting

Fact Files: Britain's Role in The Transatlantic Slave Trade

Roughly one slaving voyage in every ten experienced major rebellions. These rebellions were costly for European traders and led them to avoid certain regions known for this resistance strategy, such as Upper Guinea except during periods of high slave trade market demand. This resulted in fewer Africans entering the Transatlantic Slave Trade from these regions, which suggests that African resistance strategies were effective.

Africans were not passive

Enslaved Africans were not passive. Rebellions often began before enslaved Africans were taken on-board ships, but on-board slave ships they were very common. Here are two accounts of this:

In 1700, the African captives on board the London slave ship, *Don Carlos*, managed to arm themselves with various weapons, attack the crew and free themselves.

John Casseneuve, first mate of the *Don Carlos*, gave this first-hand account, *“Thus arm’d, they fell in crowds and parcels on our men, upon the deck unawares, and stabbed one of the stoutest of us all, who receiv’d fourteen or fifteen wounds of their knives, and so expir’d. Next they assaulted our boatswain, and cut one of his legs so round the bone, that he could not move, the nerves being cut through; others cut our cooks throat to the pipe, and others wounded three of the sailors, and threw one of them overboard in that condition, from the forecastle into the sea”*.

In 1730, June 1, a revolt took place on the British ship *Little George*. It was one of the most successful uprisings of captured Africans. Several Africans were able to slip out of their iron chains, overpower the crew, and sail the ship back to the continent of Africa, specifically to the Sierra Leone River where they abandoned the ship.

Did you know? *The rebellions, revolts, and resistance:*

- *were of concern to the white plantation owners mainly because they reduced the profits they could have made.*
- *varied in size and most were put down with the help of forces from either the British Army or the Royal Navy.*
- *took place in most British colonies around every 20 years.*

Fact Files: Britain's Role in The Transatlantic Slave Trade

The survival strategies used by the enslaved onboard the Transatlantic slave ships and on British and European plantations showed resourcefulness, and bravery. Their resistance included such actions as:

- Working slowly and resisting work.
- Damaging and breaking their work tools.
- Running away from plantations.
- Creating and supporting families and communities.
- Growing food and selling produce in markets they created as a way of increasing self-sufficiency.
- Planning and implementing rebellions and uprisings.
- Developing their own Creole languages (in the Caribbean) a mix of West African languages and colonial languages such as British. Jamaican Patois is just one example of a creole language. Doing this enabled them to use traditional words, sayings and slang/nicknames e.g. Nanny, Backra.
- Speaking African languages whenever they could in defiance of plantation rules.
- Practising and preserving African customs and cultural traditions including stories like the Duppy stories and the Anansi Tales, which originated from Ghana. Anansi, a spider, is best known for his ability to outsmart his opponents' using cunning, creativity, and wit. These traditional tales are still used today to teach life lessons of resilience and survival.
- Practising and preserving African spiritual beliefs such as Obeah and Voodoo, which gave the enslaved a way to heal and protect themselves and make sense of the world around them.
- Playing their own traditional music including elements of drumming and dancing, and call and response interactive ways of engaging with others and ensuring mutual understanding.
- Using traditional African financing methods like Susu to become economically independent.
- Adopting Christianity to get privileges, freedoms, and benefits from plantation owners although many did not really believe the Christian principles. (The plantocracy often used religion as a way of keeping the enslaved subservient and force them to drop African customs, traditions, and beliefs).
- Former enslaved men and women helping to lead the Abolitionist movement in Britain, presenting information to Parliament making them aware of the injustices and ill treatment experienced by the enslaved that sometimes led to rebellions and riots, as an action of last resort.