African slave traders generally did not sell members of their own ethnic group, instead trading those captured from rival peoples.

European merchants transported goods such as textiles, iron, guns, and alcohol to Africa. Trading their wares for people, they sold the captives to planters and mine owners in the Americas for gold, silver, sugar, and tobacco, which they took back to Europe.

Spain contracted with other European countries to ensure a steady supply of slaves to its colonies. In 1621, the first large contract, or asiento, was issued for the purchase of 38,250 slaves over nine years—31,500 of whom had to be delivered alive.

The Dutch West India Company, formed in 1621, sought unsuccessfully to establish a monopoly on trade along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea.

The greatest number of slaves taken to the Americas came from the Congo-Angola region.

ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE 1502-1870

- From Mozambique and Madagascar

The movement of slaves and goods is illustrated here, showing the major ports and regions involved in the transatlantic slave trade.