

Name

Class.....

'Agonising and insufferable'; the Atlantic slave trade
Did the 'Middle Passage' deserve its awful reputation?

The year is 1807 and you are a backbench MP in the House of Commons. William Wilberforce is trying to get the House to pass an Act banning the trade in slaves. He has asked you to take part in the debate and speak about the 'Middle Passage'.

Not everyone believes the horror stories about the 'Middle Passage'. You need to convince your fellow MPs that it does deserve its awful reputation and that the only way forward is to ban the slave trade. Wilberforce has said that he would like you to speak for two to three minutes on the subject.

Use the sources and information to help you prepare your argument.

Step One: Collecting the evidence

In order to persuade your fellow MPs of the horrors of the 'Middle Passage' you will need to have all the evidence to hand. Read through each source and decide what it tells you about the 'Middle Passage'. Do you think that you could use what it says in your argument? If it helps, fill in the table below.

<i>Source 1 tells me that...</i>	<i>Is this source reliable?</i>	<i>I could use this source to show...</i>
<i>Source 2 tells me that...</i>		

Step Two: Preparing your case

Now you need to write your speech. You probably won't have time to mention everything so you need to decide what your strongest points are.

You can write your own speech or use the structure below as a guide.

Gentlemen, the Honourable Member for Hull has proposed that an Act to ban the trade in slaves should be introduced. It is hard to find a more pressing reason than the need to bring about the end of the so-called 'Middle Passage'. Our late friend, William Pitt, once said "the circumstances of the Middle Passage alone, would in his mind, be reason enough for the Abolition."

Does the 'Middle Passage' deserve its awful reputation. I say, yes. First....

[Insert your comments here. Try to include at least three points which support your argument.]

....

Gentleman, the evidence is clear. There can be no doubt that the 'Middle Passage' does deserve its awful reputation and we should do everything in our power to bring it to an end. I ask you to support my Honourable Friend's motion to stop the trade in slaves.