

Unit
3**Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade****Filtering and Editing**

Note: the following information corresponds to Chapter 23 in your textbook.

It is important to be able to extract main ideas from a reading, filter out the less important data, and condense the reading into an edited and more focused version. In a paragraph, the main idea is the equivalent of a topic sentence. In a more extended section, the main idea is the equivalent of a thesis statement. Most social science textbooks are basically written as a series of essays. With this in mind, it is important to realize that good essay writing techniques are frequently modeled for you.

Generating Main Ideas from a Reading (or Filtering and Editing):

Generating a main idea through filtering and editing requires active reading because you must *create* a sentence, rather than underline or copy an existing one. To clarify, filtering is what you do when you are actively reading and taking the information in. You focus more on the big picture – the main idea of the paragraph you are reading – and less on the details. Editing is when you analyze the reading and express the main idea in a more condensed written (or spoken) form.

How to Generate Main Ideas from a Reading:

The reading comprehension exercise below requires you to generate a main idea, not a summary, for each paragraph in a series of topic sentences and a thesis statement for the entire selection. Read the following paragraphs, and for each one:

- Write one clear and complete sentence that expresses the main idea of each paragraph.
 - Look for a cause and effect relationship, a comparison or contrast, a connection, or a generalization addressed within the paragraph.
 - Avoid simply summarizing the paragraph or listing facts.
- Write one clear and complete thesis statement that expresses the main idea of all paragraphs.

Guided Practice:

A) In the early fifteenth century, before the European intrusion, Africa's many cultures reflected its geographic diversity. Most Africans in the North, and many in the West and East belonged to urban cultures that centered on commerce and Islamic faith. By contrast, most Africans in Central and Southern Africa – not yet influenced by Muslims or Christians - resided in village societies that focused on farming and the worship of local gods and spirits.

B) In Africa, as elsewhere, slavery had emerged in ancient times. Trans-Saharan trade routes were established by the second century C.E. and fully-formed Muslim trade networks were developed five centuries later. Into the fifteenth century, as populations and demand increased, valuable commodities including African slaves were transported throughout much of the Islamic world; including Africa, as well as Southwest and Southeast Asia.

Stronger: In the fifteenth century, Africa's cultures were divided into the urban, commercial, and Islamic regions in the North, West, and East, and the rural and traditional regions in the Center and the South.

Weaker: In the fifteenth century, Africa had many diverse cultures. The North was mostly urban and Islamic, the East and West were also urban and Islamic, but not as much. Central and Southern Africans resided more in villages, focused on farming, and in the worship of local spirits. *(Reducing unnecessary words and establishing more precise categories would strengthen this sentence)*

Stronger: Slavery was an ancient institution that was expanded due to demand through Muslim trade networks across several centuries and across the Saharan Desert, out of Africa, and throughout Asia.

Weaker: Slavery emerged in ancient times, and it grew by the seventh century C.E. through Muslim trade networks. By the fifteenth century, commodities, including slaves, were traded in Africa, Southwest Asia, and Southeast Asia. *(Emphasizing a cause/effect relationship and connecting the key concepts in the paragraph would strengthen this sentence)*

Name: _____

Practicing the Skill:

1. Africans and the Portuguese developed trading relationships in the fifteenth century. With the discovery of the Americas and the emergence of demand for labor for American sugar plantations, the Atlantic slave trade came into existence. Portugal's dominance was soon challenged as a triangular trade pattern was developed that linked Africa, the Americas, and Europe. The victims of this trade faced the horrors of capture, transport to the Americas, and forced labor under the harshest conditions. Once in the Americas, Africans adapted their cultures to the conditions in which they found themselves. Race and racism came to play a central role in New World slavery.

1. _____

2. The Atlantic slave trade's impact on Africa varied from place to place. In the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, power and wealth shifted away from the continent's interior to its seaboard. This change was especially apparent in West Africa, but the impact of the slave trade was also felt elsewhere. New African powers emerged and European countries set up colonies on the African coast. By the nineteenth century, when the slave trade was outlawed, many parts of Africa had been politically and economically transformed.

2. _____

3. Although each region of Africa was affected differently by the European intrusions, the overall impacts on the continent were extensive and profound. Traditional trade patterns were disrupted or destroyed. Historic states and kingdoms were weakened and undermined. Wars, rebellions, and slave hunts abounded. During the course of the Atlantic slave trade, sub-Saharan Africa lost about 15 million people. While Africa's population eventually recovered, the trade had a long-term impact on African family life.

3. _____

4. As trade shifted westward from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, wealth and power shifted westward to the Europeans. Central to this process were African slaves, who produced much of the sugar, rum, and coffee, mined much of the silver, and later grew much of the tobacco and cotton that sustained European power. By 1800, Europe was on its way to world domination, based in part on the servitude and suffering of countless African slaves.

4. _____

In one clear sentence, state the main idea of the entire four paragraphs (thesis statement):

