Year: 8	Subject: History	Unit title: Slavery and the Middle Passage	Term: Spring

Knowledge (Learn that):

- Scholars know that the transatlantic slave trade forcibly transported enslaved Africans through the Middle Passage to labour on plantations, generating wealth for Britain while distance and control of information concealed its brutality from much of the British public.
- Scholars know that Thomas Clarkson's 1785 essay relied on second-hand European accounts and was written to condemn slavery, so historians must consider his evidence and purpose, while later first-hand testimony from formerly enslaved people such as Olaudah Equiano strengthened and deepened the abolitionist case.
- Scholars know that independent testimony from enslaved people, sailors and doctors, alongside plans of slave ships, corroborates Clarkson's description of overcrowding, foul air, disease and high mortality during the Middle Passage.
- Scholars know that first-hand testimony and other evidence corroborate Clarkson's claim that the Middle Passage caused profound despair and that enslaved people resisted captivity through refusal, rebellion and attempts to regain their liberty.
- Scholars know that evidence demonstrates the routine violence and dehumanisation of the Middle Passage, but the sources studied provide less direct corroboration for Clarkson's specific claim that enslaved people were deliberately thrown overboard for insurance money.
- Scholars understand that Clarkson was a broadly reliable commentator on the conditions, suffering and violence of the Middle Passage because many of his claims can be corroborated, but historians should qualify this judgement because his 1785 essay relied on selected second-hand evidence and some specific claims are more securely supported than others.

Core Vocabulary:

Transatlantic slave trade, Middle Passage, Enslaved person, Slave ship, Plantation, Abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson, Olaudah Equiano, Testimony, Evidence, Claim, Corroboration, Reliability, Overcrowding, Ventilation, Mortality, Despair, Resistance, Insurance

Vocabulary to Encounter:

Cambridge University, Wadesmill, Alexander Falconbridge, John Newton, Ottobah Cugoano, William Wilberforce, Amistad, Mortality rate, First-hand testimony, Second-hand account, Provenance

Vocabulary to Retrieve:

British Empire, Colony, Plantation, Enslavement, Transatlantic slave trade, Royal Navy, Trade, Profit, Sugar, Tobacco, Abolition, Parliament

Teaching Sequence:

Lesson 1: The Transatlantic Slave Trade
Lesson 2: Thomas Clarkson and the Fight Against the Slave Trade
Lesson 3: Corroborating Clarkson's Claim about Conditions on Slave Ships
Lesson 4: Corroborating Clarkson's Claim about Despair, Suicide and Resistance
Lesson 5: Corroborating Clarkson's Claim about Deliberate Killing on Slave Ships
Lesson 6: Planning Lesson
Lesson 7: Essay Writing Lesson
(There will also be a knowledge test and whole class feedback lesson related to this content)

Disciplinary aims:

The primary disciplinary aim is for scholars to understand **evidence, corroboration and historical reliability.**
Scholars will be encouraged to:

- Distinguish a historical claim from the evidence used to support it.
- Judge reliability claim by claim rather than assigning a permanent label to an entire source.
- Consider what evidence Clarkson could access in 1785 and how his abolitionist purpose shaped the argument he constructed.
- Understand that a strong purpose does not automatically make a claim false, but makes corroboration especially important.
- Compare first-hand testimony, second-hand reporting, ship records, plans, illustrations and later accounts.
- Identify whether evidence directly corroborates a specific claim, supports only a broader claim or adds contextual depth.
- Assess source provenance, independence, proximity and purpose without reducing evaluation to generic claims about bias.
- Express different levels of confidence and reach an overall judgement that remains appropriately qualified.

This enquiry develops scholars' understanding that reliability is a relationship between a specific claim, the evidence supporting it and the question historians are asking. Sources can be valuable while remaining partial, purposeful or limited.

Writing curriculum:

Throughout this unit, scholars use writing to test claims, evaluate evidence and communicate degrees of historical confidence.

- Scholars use disciplinary vocabulary including claim, evidence, corroboration, reliability, testimony, provenance, purpose, limitation and confidence.
- They break Clarkson's account into discrete claims before comparing each with independent evidence.
- "Because, but, so" structures are adapted to explain why evidence supports a claim, introduce a limitation and state the resulting level of confidence.
- Writing distinguishes direct corroboration from evidence that supports only the broader conditions or context.
- Scholars evaluate sources in relation to the particular claim being tested rather than through generic comments about trustworthiness.
- The final essay is organised around Clarkson's motives and three claims: conditions, despair and resistance, and deliberate killing for profit.
- The conclusion reaches a qualified overall judgement, recognising that Clarkson can be broadly reliable even when some individual claims are more securely corroborated than others.

Year: 8	Subject: History	Unit title: Slavery and the Middle Passage	Term: Spring

Links to other units:

Why this and why now?

This Spring-term enquiry follows Unit 8.5, The British Empire. It narrows the lens from the methods Britain used to acquire imperial wealth and power to the evidential problem of reconstructing one especially brutal component of that system. It is positioned here to:

- Build directly on knowledge of plantation economies, colonial trade, enslaved labour and British port wealth.
- Shift from causal explanation to a focused enquiry about evidence, corroboration and reliability.
- Place formerly enslaved people's testimony at the centre of historical reconstruction.
- Show how evidence and public knowledge became tools within abolitionist campaigning.

How does this speak to what came before?

- The British Empire enquiry established how sugar, tobacco, trade and enslaved labour generated wealth and supported expansion.
- Olaudah Equiano provides substantive continuity between the Empire and Slavery enquiries.
- The Sutton Hoo enquiry introduced evidence and inference; this unit revisits evidential thinking at greater sophistication through written testimony and corroboration.
- Earlier source work provides foundations for considering provenance, purpose and the limits of surviving evidence.

How does this prepare scholars for what comes next?

- Later Year 8 study can build on abolitionist campaigning, enslaved testimony and resistance.
- Subsequent enquiries can examine how evidence, publicity and political pressure contributed to reform.
- In Year 9, scholars can apply corroboration to contested accounts of empire, migration, conflict and modern political change.
- The enquiry prepares scholars to recognise historical silences and inequalities in whose experiences were recorded and preserved.

Links to the national curriculum:

This unit supports the key stage 3 study of ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745–1901. It examines the transatlantic slave trade, the Middle Passage, abolitionist campaigning and the use of evidence to reconstruct enslaved experience.

Linking to the KS3 National Curriculum

- Scholars study the operation and human consequences of the transatlantic slave trade.
- The unit connects plantation wealth and British ports to the wider imperial economy.
- Scholars examine Thomas Clarkson, Olaudah Equiano and other testimony used in the abolitionist campaign.
- The enquiry develops historical method by requiring claims to be tested against multiple sources.

Moving Beyond the KS3 National Curriculum

1. Claim-level Reliability

- Reliability is assessed in relation to specific claims rather than through blanket judgements about whole sources.
- Scholars distinguish direct corroboration, broad support and evidential gaps.

2. Testimony, Voice and Historical Silence

- First-hand testimony from formerly enslaved people is central rather than supplementary.
- The enquiry considers how distance and control of information shaped what British audiences knew.

3. Agency, Resistance and Dehumanisation

- Enslaved people are studied as individuals who endured, resisted and sought liberty, not only as passive victims.
- The system's violence and financial logic are examined without losing sight of human experience.

4. Disciplinary Literacy and Qualified Argument

- Scholars use evidential language to communicate varying degrees of confidence.
- The final essay synthesises motive, provenance and corroboration into a carefully qualified judgement.