

Slavery in the Chocolate Industry

'Tell them, when they are eating chocolate, they are eating my flesh.'

Vincent, an enslaved cocoa worker in the Ivory Coast

Drissa's story

Chocolate is made from cocoa, a common crop in West Africa. Cocoa trees are planted on cleared forestland and boys and young men are employed to tend them and harvest the beans. Drissa is a teenager, and like many of his age, he travelled to the Ivory Coast from one of the neighbouring countries, in search of work.

Drissa was offered what sounded like a good job on a cocoa farm. When he reached the isolated farm, he realised he had been tricked, but it was too late to turn back. He and the other young men worked long hours with no reward. At night they were locked in a small room with only a tin can as a toilet. Food was scarce and many of them suffered from exhaustion. Those who didn't work fast enough were beaten.

At times workers would try and escape, but invariably they were caught. They were then tied up and whipped. The brutality, the fear, the isolation and the exhaustion all combined to break the spirit of Drissa and his fellow captives. They didn't know who to turn to for help.

Bitter Sweet

Chocolate is one of the most popular luxury foods in the world. In Britain the average person eats the equivalent of 200 bars a years.

The Ivory Coast produces half of the cocoa sold on the world market.

Until recently, the Government bought all the cocoa from farms and re-sold it on the world market. The Government fixed the price of cocoa, so the cocoa farmers knew what they would earn for their crops. But the Ivory Coast has a problem - it is carrying a huge international debt.

Today the Ivory Coast owes more than \$14 billion and has to spend five times more on debt repayments than it can afford to spend on health care for its own people. Since the 1980s the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have been involved in lending money and rescheduling debt in countries that cannot pay the interest on their loans, such as the Ivory Coast. These new loans come with conditions. Governments are required to implement economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

In the Ivory Coast the SAP required the government to stop buying cocoa from the farmers at a fixed price. Instead the Government was asked to step back and allow the cocoa buyers of the world market direct access to the farmers. When this happened, the world price of cocoa fell, and the farmers and plantation owners received less money for their crops. As their profits fell, more and more farmers in the Ivory Coast were unable to pay their workers, and conditions on cocoa farms deteriorated.

activity 1

Chocolate on the Move

Aim:

To provide students with an understanding of how chocolate came to Europe. The activity also allows students to understand how the increasing demand for cocoa and sugar in Europe led to an increasing number of slaves working in the Americas.

You will need:

a map for each person or pair in the class.

Optional - a copy of the cocoa information for each person or pair.

Method:

- @ Have the class work individually or in pairs.
- @ Write up the 'cocoa' information on the board, or if you prefer, photocopy the information and hand it out to students with the map.
- @ Using the cocoa dates, students should chart the movement of cocoa on their maps. Arrows can be used to show the direction in which the cocoa is moving, with the relevant date written along the line. Students may wish to use different colours for each leg of the journey.
- @ Students then answer the questions on the map, using the information provided.

- @ They can then draw a time line using all the information they have been given. If preferred, this can be a class activity, with each person/pair taking a date, writing the relevant information, and illustrating it. The finished time line can be used as a classroom display.



Cocoa plantation de Makaia-Vuabi de Monsieur A.Jacques, Belgian Congo around 1910.
Cocoa has always been a profitable business for Europeans.

Cocoa dates

600AD

Records of the Mayans and Aztecs producing a chocolate drink, from the wild cocoa trees that grew in the tropical area that is now Southern Mexico.

1526

Don Cortes, the Spanish explorer, travels to Mexico. He spends time with the Aztecs, and drinks the cocoa drink with Emperor Montezuma

1528

Cortes returns to Spain, with his ship loaded with cocoa beans and all the ingredients to make the chocolate drink. He adds sugar to the Aztecs recipe. The Spanish keep the recipe secret from other European countries for nearly a century.

An Italian traveller, Francesco Carletti visits Central America, and sees how the Aztecs prepare the cocoa beans to make the drink. He brings back the formula and by **1606** chocolate is well established in Italy. Cocoa and sugar are the two vital ingredients.

In **1615** the King of France, Louis XIII, marries Anne, the daughter of the King of Spain. With the Spanish Queen comes the tradition of drinking chocolate, and soon it is fashionable to drink chocolate in France.

1646 the trend spreads to Germany, through German visitors to Italy.

In the **1650s** the drink arrives in England from France

c1500s The first Africans were taken to the Caribbean by Europeans, and forced to work as their slaves.

In 1740 there were 550 coffee houses in London alone, all selling chocolate as a hot drink.

1807
the trading of slaves from Africa to the Americas is made illegal

1831
John Cadbury rented a small factory in Birmingham to produce cocoa and drinking chocolate.

1849
John Cadbury introduced a solid chocolate bar for eating.

The Aztec's chocolate drink was 'flavoured with vanilla and other spices, and so prepared as to be reduced to a froth of the consistency of honey, which gradually dissolved in the mouth, and was taken cold'.



1657 a Frenchman set up the first London Chocolate House, his advertisement read: 'In Bishoppgate Street, in Queen's Head Alley, at a Frenchman's house, is an excellent West Indian drink called Chocolate to be sold, where you may have it ready at any time and also unmade at reasonable rates.'

Estimated slave imports:

1700-1760

1761-1810

British Caribbean

626,000

930,000

French Caribbean

365,000

650,000

Source: 'General History of the Caribbean'
Unesco



questions:

- ? 1. Who worked on the plantations producing sugar and cocoa in the Caribbean?
- ? 2. Europeans bought African slaves from West Africa, shade in West Africa on your map.
- ? 3. What evidence can you find of cocoa sales increasing between 1750 and 1789?
- ? 4. What result did the Europeans' love of chocolate (cocoa and sugar) have on the numbers of slaves leaving West Africa?
- ? Sugar was mixed with cocoa as well as other drinks at the time, can you name them?

T ___

C _____

R ___

In 1750 one Spanish company was exporting 58,800 fanegas (2940 tonnes) of cocoa from the Caribbean, in 1789 (31 years later), that amount had nearly doubled going up to 103,600 fanegas (5180 tonnes).