**Primary Sources on the Middle Passage**

**Primary Source #1-Alexander Falconbridge**

*Alexander Falconbridge was an English surgeon aboard a slave ship. He recorded some of what he witnessed.*

**Space on the Slave Decks**

“…they are frequently stowed so close, as to admit of no other position than lying on their sides. Nor will the height between decks…permit the indulgence of an erect posture; especially where there are platforms, which is generally the case.”

“…But the exclusion of fresh air is among the most intolerable. For the purpose of admitting this needful refreshment, most of the ships in the slave trade are provided, between the decks, with five or six air-ports on each side of the ship, of about five inches in length and four in breadth….But whenever the sea is rough and the rain heavy, it becomes necessary to shut these and every other conveyance by which the air is admitted. The fresh air being thus excluded, the Negroes' rooms soon grow intolerable hot. The confined air, rendered noxious by the effluvia [gases] exhaled from their bodies and being repeatedly breathed, soon produces fevers and fluxes [dysentery] which generally carries off great numbers of them. During the voyages I made, I was frequently witness to the fatal effects of this exclusion of fresh air.

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**Food**

“…The diet of the Negroes while on board, consists chiefly of horse beans boiled to the consistency of a pulp; of boiled yams and rice and sometimes a small quantity of beef or pork. The latter are frequently taken from the provisions laid in for the sailors. They sometimes make use of a sauce composed of palm-oil mixed with flour, water and pepper, which the sailors call slabber-sauce. Yams are the favorite food of the Eboe or Bight Negroes, and rice or corn of those from the Gold or Windward Coast; each preferring the produce of their native soil....Upon the Negroes refusing to take sustenance, I have seen coals of fire, glowing hot, put on a shovel and placed so near their lips as to scorch and burn them. And this has been accompanied with threats of forcing them to swallow the coals if they any longer persisted in refusing to eat. These means have generally had the desired effect. I have also been credibly informed that a certain captain in the slave-trade, poured melted lead on such of his Negroes as obstinately refused their food....”

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**Primary Source #2- Olaudah Equiano**

*Olaudah Equiano was an African who was transported taken from Africa and enslaved in the New World.*

**Jumping Overboard**

“One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea: immediately another quite dejected fellow, who on account of his illness was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery.”

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