



Conditions On Board a Slave Ship

In this #TallShipTuesday, we focus on the story of the Amistad Case and the eventual return of the previously enslaved people to their rightful home. While this story had a more hopeful ending, there were many more that did not. In fact, the conditions aboard slave ships were often so dismal, many did not survive the [Middle Passage](#), an 80-day voyage across the Atlantic.

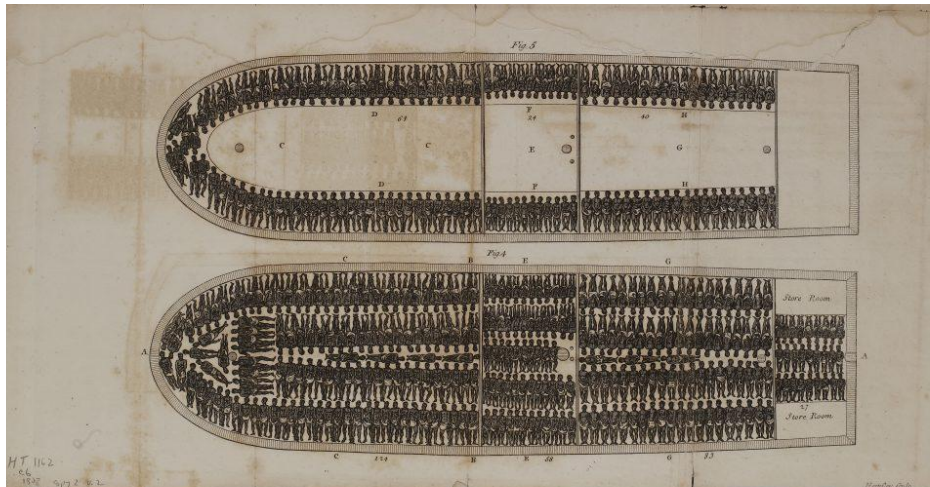


Diagram of sleeping arrangements on a slave ship

Between 1500 and 1866, approximately 12.5 million enslaved Africans were transported from Africa to the Americas, but it is estimated that only 10.7 million made it to their destinations. The size of the slave ships were anywhere from 10 to over 500 tons, and these ships could carry as many as [700 enslaved people](#). This meant that there was often no room to even sit or lay down, and because they were [shackled to their spots](#), were unable to move to get more space.

Disease ran rampant aboard these vessels. Beyond seasickness, [there were outbreaks](#) of dysentery, smallpox and other illnesses. The slaves were fed inadequate food and were locked below decks, only seeing the sun occasionally for mandatory exercise; and when someone died, their body was thrown overboard. According to some reports, [sharks would follow slave ships](#) because of how many bodies were abandoned in the ocean.

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