Describe the impact of the European slave trade on West African societies? (How important were the ideals of the Enlightenment to the eventual ending of the slave trade? Explain)

Life in Africa before the 1700s
Between 850BCE and 1600 (CE) great cultures and civilizations flourished throughout Africa. Africa’s history before European colonization is rich of stories much like other histories in other continents.

Africa was Home to Many Kingdoms.
The earliest African civilizations developed along the Nile River in the Northeast. The early settlers quickly found the annual floods of the Nile prepared excellent soil for farming. Eventually more and more settlers came and towns and then cities grew. In the lower Nile area developed the ancient civilization known as Egypt (which we studied in grade 11).

North East Kingdoms: The Ancient Kingdom of Kush (800BCE-350CE)
The Ancient Kingdom of Kush (800BCE-350CE) grew in the upper Nile area. There were located in Nubia (northeastern region of the present day Sudan). The word nub was a Egyptian word for gold and the region was famous for its abundant production of gold. We know the ancient Kush had a complex writing system that has yet to be deciphered. The Kushites were rich, powerful and had an ongoing relationship with Egypt. They were agriculturists and herders who traded with Egypt and tropical Africa. They “traded Egypt with gold, ivory, ebony, ostrich eggs and feathers, wild animals and slaves.” Egypt conquered Nubia during the New Kingdom (1580-1100BCE) and Egypt influenced the people of Nubia (ex. They would pray to Amon-Re and Isis – Kushites were polytheistic and they did worship local gods like the war god Apedemak who had lion’s head and Shomeker – a creator god and chief local god; Nubians built Egyptian styled temples and pyramids, shabtis dated 690-664 BCE were found in the tomb of the Nubian ruler Taharqa,…). After the end of Egypt’s New Kingdom, The Kushites and their king Piankhi conquered Egypt. Kushite kings like Taharqa formed the 25th Egyptian dynasty – this dynasty only lasted for 100 years when the Assyrians took over with superior iron weapons. The Kushites moved their capital and their kingdom continued for another 1000 years.

There new capital Meroe (mare-oh-ay) was center for many trade routes and had a booming iron industry – which many believe the iron technology of the Kushites spread to west and southern Africa. Kushites made high quality clay pottery (“some of the finest in the world” –Echoes Text p.266), jewelry makers especially in gold and shells; they also been great palaces whose ruins have been found by Archaeologists near Wad been Naqa) Kushites may have invented the first irrigation machines when they invented the saqia – a wooden wheel that pulled the filled pots out of the river and then dumped water into a reservoir and the reservoir was then used for irrigation. This helped the farmers and archaeologists discovered pots all over Nubia.

Finally, around 350CE, the armies of King Ezana of Axum invaded and destroyed Meroe.
North East Kingdom: The Kingdom of Axum (1-7th Century CE)

The Axumite Kingdom was located on the Northern end of the Ethiopian Highlands, close to the Western shore of the Red Sea. Volcanic rocks formed the soils, and thus were more fertile here than in most other regions of Africa. This area also varying degrees of elevation of the highlands and so there were variations in climate and vegetation. Rainfall was also more reliable in the northeastern African regions.

In some areas farmers harvested two or three crops a year, and in some areas they could harvest and plant at the same time. Therefore the first Axumite cities developed in the northern part of the Ethiopian highlands. Their location had advantages including the accessibility to Egypt and Levant, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Eden and the Mediterranean Sea which was good for commercial trade.

The ancient kingdom of Ethiopia was named after its capital city – Axum. Axum took over the important trade routes previously controlled by the Kushites. By 300CE, almost all the goods coming in and out of northern Africa went through Axum (particularly Adulis – important port city). The Axumite kingdom had international trade with the Roman Empire, South Arabia, Nubia, Somalia and India. Axum’s imports included iron, glass, fabrics, sugar cane, vegetable oil, spices, precious metals,… It exported African raw materials and luxury goods, like ivory, gold, rhinoceros horn, slaves, and live animals. Until the rise of Islam in the 7th century, the Axumites were most the dominate trading power in the region. Unlike Meroe, Axum minted its own money, which included fine gold coins. The capital itself had large stone buildings and stone towers (stelae) that reached as high as 31m – although the purpose of the towers remains a mystery.

King Ezana, in the 4th century, converted to Christianity and declared his country a Christian state – the first Christian state in the world. Prior to this they were polytheistic – Almouqah was the moon god and Mahrem was the war god. Axum kings believed the kingd was the number one ruler and the high priest – and possessed divine powers ex. an inscription for King Ezana “King of kings, the son of the invincible god Ares”. The Amharic successors considered themselves the only true Christians. After the rise of Islam, the Axumites and the Muslims had good relationship in the 7th century, but by the 8th century, the Muslims destroyed the port city of Adulis and closed off the Mediterranean Sea and crippled the North African trade routes. Eventually the Amhara Ethiopians (who believed they were descendants of King Solomon and the old Axumite line of kings) took it over in the 12th century.

The early peoples probably settled in the area around 500 BCE. Southern Arabian emigrants (Semitic speaking) intermarried and exchanged customs with Kushitic-speaking Africans – the only one formed from a mixture of Semitic and African cultures. Out of this mix of cultures, came a unique written and spoken language called Ge’ez. This written language contained vowel markings in each letter and was written from left to right. In the 5th century they replaced Greek with Ge’ez for writing church services, records and manuscripts (which included the bible – It took 200 years to translate the bible into Ge’ez).

The Eastern African City States (East Coast) – Swahili Civilization

As Axum declined, several trading cities and city-states with a unique Muslim African culture developed along the narrow East African coast that stretches from modern Somalia to
Mozambique. This culture is sometimes referred to as the Swahili Civilization – named after the modern inhabitants of the East African coast – many of whom speak Swahili. (Swahili is a Bantu language rich in borrowed Arabic words which originated on the coast as a trade language between foreign traders and the natives of the East African coast. The word Swahili is the plural for the Arabic word Sahil which means coastal people. (Today, Swahili is the official language of Tanzania and Kenya, and is spoken in much of eastern and central Africa)

Archaeologists found that cities here began as small fishing and farming villages with wattle and daub (sticks and mud or clay) huts. Eventually this small villages became cities by the 10th century – where these coastal towns had houses of several stories built from coral or cut stone.

Different names were given for these peoples. The Arabs and Persians called the land between southern Somalia and northern Kenya – the land of the Zanj. The ancient Egyptians called Somalia – the land of Punt, Greeks called the East African coast – Azania. The Medieval Arabs called the Somali people the Barbers (Berbers), the Portuguese explorers knew Africans as Moors.

The East African coast had good amount of rainfall and had coral reefs protecting the coastline from the ocean waves. There are a lot of islands in this part of the Indian ocean which offer some protection such as Zanzibar, Mafia, Kilwa,…. The coast is frequently broken up by a number of deep inlets or valleys, which provide natural harbours. Local sailboats called Dhows would sail from the ocean at high tide to anchor at the shore; as the tide receded, they came to rest on the shore where they were – and still are today – unloaded by hand. The sailors learned to use the Monsoon Trade Winds to help trade their goods to India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the Persian Gulf, Egypt and Arabia. The Winds changed direction every 6 months. Between Nov. and March, these winds blow from the northeast, and between April and September, they blow from the southwest.

There was no central government on the East African Coast. Each town had a chief that looked after that town’s affairs. Towns like Mogadishu, Kilwa and Mombasa were examples of city states. The most important exports from the East African Coast were gold, iron, ivory, rhinoceros horn, leopard skins, and gums; these were exchanged for copper, tin, silver jewelry, fabrics, sugar, and oil. This part of Africa saw an expansion of trade. Islamic objects like pottery, glass vessels, and glass beads could be found all along the African coast.

Beginning in the 9th century, new immigrants from Arabia, Perisa and India settled on the East African Coast. Where ever they settled, they intermarried with coastal Bantus, who ultimately adopted Islam as their religion. Eventually ruling families adopted the values of Islam and a centralized authority began to develop.

Kilwa, was a prosperous city-state (located in modern Tanzania). In 1331, it was probably the most prosperous city state in Eastern Africa. It controlled the coastal and Indian Ocean trade for many centuries. It controlled and trade vast amounts of gold and ivory during the 13th century. You could find palaces, a Great Mosque, and large stone houses (included ceramics from China) here. Mogadishu (capital of present day Somalia) was also considered a large town at this time
period. You could house four to five stories high in Mogadishu. Mogadishans ate a large variety of foods – rice, chicken, vegetables, mangoes, bananas,…. hundreds of camels and cattle everyday.

Thriving trade and commerce continued until the 16th century. The Portuguese in 1505 attacked Kilwa and Mombasa and within a year attacked and destroyed the Somali city of Brava. The trading cities were unsuccessful at defending themselves against the Portuguese ship and cannons. A captain of one of the ships that attacked Brava described the Portuguese brutality. “The Portuguese flotilla arrived at a city called Brava, and had entered it by force of arms killing many Moors and stealing great wealth which its owners disdained to save, thinking only of defending themselves; nor their women, who were left there with great wealth and elegance, with 7 to 8 bangles on each arm, and as many on the legs, very thick and valuable. This gave occasion to great cruelty because the men, more blinded by greed than inspired by mercy, and not to waste time, cut off their arms, legs and ears, where they carried the jewelry, without any thought of pity”

Although the Portuguese were not successful in controlling the whole trade network, and even though some Swahili groups did regain control of some of their cities by the end of the 16th century, the cities never regained the economic power and prosperity they had enjoyed before the Portuguese came.

Central Africa:

a) The Great Zimbabwe
The Great Zimbabwe is presently occupied by the Shona people, and Zimbabwe is a Shona word for “stone building” or “sacred house”. There are many stone ruins in modern Zimbabwe. Some of the huge stone blocks were cut or carved so well that they could be joined without the use of mortar. Other ruins like a palace, water tower, high walls, steps, and walkways and other archaeological finds indicate this area was settled between 11 and 15th centuries. Recent archaeologists confirm that the Shona’s ancestors – a Bantu group was the most likely to have build such structures (and not Egyptians, Persians, Sumerians, or Phoenicians as the Europeans first believed when they first visited the ruins in the 19th century).

b) The Mutapa Empire
By the end of the 1400s, the rulers of Zimbabwe’s gold producing regions broke away from Great Zimbabwe. One of these rulers was Mutota who used force to expand and make his empire which was called the Mutapa Empire (Mutota was given the title Mwene Mutapa meaning Master Pillager) which was centred on the northern part of the Zimbabwe Plateau (the very large territory expanded from the Zambezi to the Limpopo River and covered wide stretches of the Kalahari Desert and the Indian Ocean. The empire was a major source of gold, ivory and copper. It became a major centre for trade until the Portuguese found them. Although the Portuguese were friendly at first, decided to attack them in 1570.

West Africa:

West Africa covers the territory between the Sahara Desert in the north and the Gulf of Guinea in the south. From west to east, the region stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to near Lake Chad.
This region includes important rivers like Senegal and Niger – both long rivers which were homes to early settlers as well as useful trade routes.

Between 500 to 1600CE – this region was home to many powerful and prosperous kingdoms. The major kingdoms – Ghana, Mali and Songhay were positioned on the trans-Saharan trade network that linked West Africa to North Africa and the Middle East. These three kingdoms controlled major trade routes by collecting taxes on all merchandise transported through their territory. They in turn exported ivory, gold, slaves, kola nuts,…in exchange for salt, iron, copper, steel, dates, glass beads and horses. While the kingdoms of West Africa prospered through farming and trade, they built many cosmopolitan cities, including Gao, Timbuktu (Tombouctou) and Jenne. For centuries, these cities were important economic, religious, political and cultural centres.

Africa and Europe:
Population Growth:
In 1500, the population of West Africa was 11 million; and west central Africa was about 8 million. The introduction of American food crops such as corn (maize) and raising livestock help the population grow. Many Africans sustained themselves by working as ironworkers and by trading in craft products and resources such as iron ore, copper, salt and palm products.

African Societies:
At the local level, family lineage controlled access to land and resources, Alliances were formed between local lineages through marriage and giving of “bridewealth” (opposite to dowries). These local lineages were controlled by elders who controlled the resources and the bridewealth. Ruling over several family lineages at times was a “divine king” (divine because people saw his political powers connected to various supernatural powers). In kingdoms of West Africa such as Mali, Ghana, and Songhay, the king and royalty generally maintained control over warfare and trade.

Early Trade with the Europeans
Initially, African goods such as pepper, gold and alum were traded to Europeans for items like firearms, metal, textiles, rum and tobacco. These European goods carried with them a certain prestige and so were used as part of the bridewealth allocated through local families

When Europeans wanted to trade for slaves, the nature of the West African societies changed. African kings formed new states where none had existed before, so they could find a greater supply of potential slaves.

Slavery and the 18th Century
Slavery existed in African societies long before European contact. There were three ways one could be enslaved. The first method was “pawnship”. A person could sell another person or even pawn him or herself in order to settle a debt. Sometimes, in times of famine, people even pawned themselves in return for access to food. The bargain included rights to the slave’s labor and children. The second method of enslavement was as a result of the judicial process. If one
committed a crime against one’s own lineage, one was cut off from the support of kin. The person would be declared “at odds with the supernatural order” since by offending kin, he or she had also offended his or her ancestors. When this happened, he or she would be sold as a slave. The third method that one become a slave is if he or she were captured in war. If a person was enslaved in Africa, he or she could still be a functioning part of his or her owner’s family. He or she would lack the rights of lineage of the owner’s family, but the treatment received was better than the harsh treatment African slaves suffered by way of European slave traders.

Profits for slaves could be enormous (300%) and for others disastrous. Costs for European slave traders included fees and taxes that had to be paid to African authorities, and financial losses due to losses of ships and crew at sea. They also had to hire people in Africa to load slaves onto ships. It is estimated that the overall annual profit of slaving in the 18th century was as much as 24 percent, but, by the end of the 18th century (1769-1800) traders were only making 8-13 percent annually.

By the beginning of the 18th century, slaves were the primary export from Africa. Slavery solved the problem of the labor shortage in America. The enormous amounts of sugar, tobacco and cotton production required a large number of human labor.

Churches also supported the practice of slavery. French Bishop Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (1627-1704) in 1690 wrote that trading slaves was allowed under the laws of man and God, quoting works of Saint Paul (eg Ephesians 6:5-8: “slaves obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.”) Protestant leaders in the Dutch Church as well as the bishops of the Anglican Church tried to justify slavery. Some tried to justify slavery on the belief that Blacks were stronger and more resistant to the climatic and working conditions of the colonial plantations. Some said that if slavery was banned, the slave trade would still continue illegally.

Between 1701-1810, two million slaves were exported from Africa by England alone. France and Portugal exported 600,000 slaves each in the same period.

Historians suggest that between 2.5 to 14 million Africans were displaced from Africa. Poor records and the high number of deaths make it difficult to find a true number. In 1967, American scholar Philip D. Curtin of the University of Wisconsin figured that 9.5 million Africans were exported during the African Diaspora. He said that one percent went to Europe, 6.8 percent went to Canada and the USA, 42.2% to the Caribbean and 49.1 percent to Latin America.

The Colony at Cape of Good Hope
The Cape of Good Hope which was the southernmost tip of Africa was inhabited by approx. 50 000 Khoikhoi, San and Bantu people.

The English (East India Company) tried to settle there, conflicts began with the Khoikhoi And the English were driven out. The Khoikhoi suffered heavy losses as well due to fighting and smallpox epidemics. The Dutch landed there in 1652 while the Khoikhoi were dispersed. The Dutch began importing slaves by the mid 17th century. By 1711, there were 1711 privately
owned slaves in the colony, and by 1793, the number grew to 14,747. Originally, these slaves had come from India and Indonesia, but by the 18th century, they were coming primarily from Mozambique and Madagascar.

Slaves here had very little family life, due to the low ratio of women to men. The Dutch made little attempt to Christianize them and used coercion as a means to control. There were also racial divisions between Indonesian and African slaves and even among Africans themselves, with the worst jobs going to the slaves from Mozambique. Slave revolts, however, did not experience any significant slave revolts until the 19th century.

**Abolitionists**

During the (late) 18th century the abolitionist movement (the movement to end slavery) gained momentum.

Quakers in the USA, and other humanitarians in France and England led this movement. Abbe Guillaume-Thomas Francois Raynal (1713-1796) who never left Europe composed his survey of world conditions of slavery entirely from books. His book *Philosophical and Political History of the Commercial Establishments of Europeans in the Two Indies* (1770-1781) appeared in three editions and had 50 printings in a bunch of languages shows the world wide interest in the issue of slavery.

Raynal was influenced by enlightened thinkers like Rousseau and Montesquieu. His famous book gave a negative overview of the European world system. He was not hostile as to what the Europeans had done. He even acknowledged how Europeans brought arts and sciences to “formerly barbarian lands” (Montesquieu believed this too).

He believed it was okay for to colonize uninhabited lands, but if the colonized lands had a local population, than you had to treat them with hospitality. He said he understood why the Chinese did not allow foreigners on to their lands. He believed intermarriage was an acceptable and would end competition between groups of different racial origins.

He believed that the discovery of the East and West Indies had been a catastrophe for much of humanity.

Eventually slavery was abolished

France abolished in Sept. 27, 1791. Decrees issued between 1792-94 abolished slavery in the French colonies even though there was opposition from some colonists.

**North America:**

In 1793, the assembly in Upper Canada passed an act “to prevent the further introduction of slaves and to limit the term of contracts of servitude.” Slavery remained for those present before this act. However, few slaves were in Upper Canada by the time of emancipation was enacted in England in 1834.

In North America, slavery was abolished in Mexico in 1829, but persisted in the Southern United States- and became a central cause of the American Civil War (1861-1866). The North won and officially ended slavery.

Caribbean:
Some people began to openly fight back against slavery. Toussaint L’Ouverture led the slave revolt in Haiti in 1802. He was a former slave (who read Raynal’s works) understand imperial expansion and trade of Europe. He was eventually captured by the French in 1802 and taken to France where he died in prison the following year. Bitter fighting continued in Haiti and this led to the independence of the country with a Black majority in 1804.

Conclusion:
By the time slavery was abolished by all European powers, much of the world had been altered. Heavy depopulation, particularly of young males, had weakened African communities and states. Meanwhile, indigenous peoples in the Caribbean who had been decimated by exploitation and disease were replaced by African slaves. In Latin America and the Caribbean, present-day populations reflect the blending of European settlers with indigenous peoples and African slaves.