The Haitian Revolution

What was the Haitian Revolution?
Who was Toussaint L'Ouverture?
What role did race play in the Revolution?
What was the Haitian Revolution?

- The Haitian Revolution was a political conflict on the island of Hispaniola (Haiti / Dominican Republic)
  - 1791-1804
  - European powers
  - Haitian rebels / slaves

- One of the most successful anti-slavery rebellions in world history
What was Saint-Domingue?

- Saint-Domingue was the richest of all the colonies in the New World
- Haiti
- Controlled by France
- $$\ = \text{sugar cane}

- French brought in African slaves to work the cane fields
- 1788 = 500,000 slaves to 60,000 white colonists (8:1)
The colony of Saint-Domingue
French importation of slaves from Africa
The Cane Fields of Saint-Domingue
What was the colonial class system like on Saint-Domingue?

- Lots of racial / social tension in the colony
  - Rich plantation owners
  - Gens de couleur (people of color)
  - African slaves

- The “gens de couleur” were denied equal rights even though some were successful
How were the African slaves treated on the island?

- One word = BRUTAL
  - Long work hours
  - Bad conditions
  - Disease / malnutrition
  - High death rate (20’s)
  - Savage punishment

- Many slaves attempted to flee their masters and hid in the mountains (“maroons”)
Work in the Cane Fields
Production of French Sugar
Slave Punishments
How does the Revolution start on Saint-Domingue?

- The trouble starts in 1789 with the French Revolution
  - Declaration of the Rights of Man

- The “Gens de couleur” citizens of the colony demand equal rights
  - The ruling white classes refuses
  - Threats of violence
Oge’s Execution ("Broken on the Wheel")
How does the Revolution start on Saint-Domingue?

- In 1791, a voodoo priest / “maroon” leader named Boukman Dutty sparked a slave uprising
  - Terrorized whites
  - Burned plantations
  - Freed slaves

- Saint-Domingue’s white colonists make a deal with the British for help
  - Believed the French government cared little for them
  - Desired independence
Boukman Dutty (¿-1791)
Destruction of French Plantations

Courtesy of The Library Company of Philadelphia
Who is Toussaint L'Ouverture?

- Toussaint L'Ouverture is one of the most successful of the African revolutionaries
  - 1743-1803
  - Brilliant businessman / general

- Well-educated in Enlightenment philosophy
  - Believed a black “messiah” would rise to lead the slaves to victory
How does L'Ouverture turn the revolution around?

- L'Ouverture is a master manipulator
  - Gains help from the Spanish to defeat the British
  - Switches the French in return for an end to slavery / defeats the Spanish

- By 1796, L'Ouverture is declared governor of the colony
  - Wants to create an all-black republic
  - Expels all whites / foreigners
L'Ouverture’s troops in battle
What issues did L'Ouverture face as the new leader of Saint-Domingue?

- The “gen de colour” rebel against L’Ouverture
  - Want to remain French
  - “War of the Classes” (1799)

- L’Ouverture gains help from the US to defeat this uprising
  - US fears French / British using Saint-Domingue as a military base
What issues did L'Ouverture face as the new leader of Saint-Domingue?

- L'Ouverture also faces economic issues
  - Cane fields / plantations are destroyed
  - No economy

- L'Ouverture forces his African followers back to work (using forced labor)
  - Dictator?
  - Is this slavery again?
Is everyone happy with L’Ouverture as Saint-Domingue’s leader?

- Many white and “gen de colours” are unhappy with L’Ouverture rule
  - Petition Napoleon for help

- In 1801, Napoleon dispatched an army to Saint-Domingue to retake the island
  - Little resistance
  - L’Ouverture is arrested / jailed
L’Ouverture’s Surrender / Arrest
What eventually ends French rule in Saint-Domingue for good?

- Napoleon tries to reinstitute slavery / sugar cane production
  - The slaves again revolt
  - Tropical disease ravage French troops

- By 1804, Napoleon recalls his army
  - The country of Haiti declares its independence
How is the Haitian Revolution viewed by the rest of the world?

- Many other countries watch the revolution with fear
  - US = fears a slave revolt in the South
  - Refused to recognize Haitian independence till 1862

- Helped to push the Louisiana Purchase (1803)
The Louisiana Purchase (1803)
How is the Haitian Revolution viewed today?

- The Haitian Revolution is celebrated today as one of the most “democratic” revolutions
- Race
- True “Enlightenment”

- However, Haiti remains one of the world’s poorest countries
2010 Haitian Earthquake