

The Slave Trade (Morland)

taken from: *Africans in America* <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h296.html>

Background

By the time that *The Slave Trade* was painted in 1791, George Morland was an established English artist. He gained his reputation, in part, by his compositions of childhood subjects, but he was convinced by a poet friend to make the slave trade the subject of some paintings. As the movement to abolish the African slave trade grew in Britain, Morland painted *The Slave Trade*, as well as other similar paintings, inspired by one of his friend's poems:



Image Credit: Wilberforce House, Kingston upon Hull City Museums and Art Galleries, UK

Two British captains with their barges came,
And quickly made a purchase of the young;
But one was struck with Ulkna, void of shame,
And tore her from the husband where she clung.

Her faithful Chief, tho' stern in rugged war,
Seeing his Ulkna by a White caress'd,
To part with her, "and little son Tengarr!"
His gentler feeling could not be suppress.

Th'indignant tear steals down his ebon cheek,
His gestures speak an agitated soul!
In vain his streaming eyes for mercy seek,
From hearts long harden'd in this barter foul.

With hands uplifted, he with sighs besought
The wretch that held a bludgeon o'er his head,
And those who dragg'd him, would have pity taught
By his dumb signs, to strike him instant dead.

While his dear Ulkna's sad entreating mein,
Did but increase the brute's unchaste desire;
He vaunting bears her off, her sobs are vain,
They part the man and wife whom all admire.