



# HOW TO ANSWER THE SOURCE COMPARISON QUESTION

**STEP 1**  
**OVERALL**  
**JUDGEMENT: DO**  
**THE SOURCES**  
**AGREE**  
**OR**  
**DISAGREE?**

**STEP 2**  
**FIND THEMES OF**  
**COMPARISON,**  
**HIGHLIGHT AND**  
**MATCH UP.**

**STEP 3**  
**MAKE 2**  
**COMPARISONS**  
**USING**  
**QUOTATIONS**  
**FROM THE**  
**SOURCES.**

**The sources will either largely agree or disagree.  
The question will be worth 4 marks.**

Source A is taken from a slave ship captain's diary in the 1770s

Slave ships were much more profitable when tightly packed. Loose pack did not offer the trader the same level of income but the mortality rate was lower among the slaves. This meant that the slaves generally might be at better health upon arriving in the Caribbean on "loose packers". Some have said that they can smell a slave ship before they saw it. It is true that the slave's deck became a sticking mass of human waste, but this was unavoidable as they must be chained up lest they try to escape.

Source B is taken from a school history textbook

Whether a slave ship was a "tight-packer" or a "loose packer" was generally a question of what was most profitable. It was believed that by giving the slaves better food, a certain amount of liberty and more space the mortality rate, which generally was very high, would go down, and the captain could in fact receive a better price for the slaves in the Caribbean, because the slaves were in a better condition. The stench on board all slave ships was foul but perhaps worse on a tight pack ship. Many slaves became seasick or developed diarrhoea on board.

Model Answer

Overall, the sources agree to an extent about the conditions on board slave ships.  
(1 mark)

Sources A and B agree that slave ships had a terrible stench. Source A says "Some have said that they can smell a slave ship before they saw it. It is true that the slave's deck became a sticking mass of human waste" and Source B says "The stench on board all slave ships was foul but perhaps worse on a tight pack ship. Many slaves became seasick or developed diarrhoea on board".

(2 marks – this is a developed comparison supported by specific references to each source)

The sources also agree about the benefits of loose pack slave ships. Source A says that on loose pack ships "the mortality rate was lower among the slaves. This meant that the slaves generally might be at better health upon arriving in the Caribbean" and Source B says that when slaves were given "a certain amount of liberty and more space the mortality rate, which generally was very high, would go down, and the captain could in fact receive a better price for the slaves in the Caribbean, because the slaves were in a better condition."

(2 marks – this is a developed comparison supported by specific references to each source)