



The Plantation South

Objectives

1. Explain the significance of cotton and the cotton gin to the South.
2. Describe what life was like for free and enslaved African Americans in the South.

Main Idea

As cotton production expanded in the South to supply the northern textile industry, planters increased their use of slave labor.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Explain Problems From the Past Why did problems occur in the past? Try to answer this question as you read. It will help you connect events and understand people's beliefs and actions. Put yourself in the shoes of the people about whom you read. What problems would you have with these same issues? Explain these problems to clarify them.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

devote, p. 397

revolt, p. 400

Key Terms and People

cotton gin, p. 396

slave code, p. 399

spiritual, p. 400

Nat Turner, p. 400

Background Knowledge As you have read, Eli Whitney's system of interchangeable parts revolutionized industry. Another of Whitney's inventions had an equally powerful impact on the rural South.

The Cotton Kingdom

As the North became more urban and industrialized, the South remained largely rural. Two events changed life in the South. First, a boom in textiles caused by the Industrial Revolution created a huge demand for cotton. Second, a new invention allowed the South to satisfy that demand.

The Cotton Gin In 1793, Eli Whitney devised a simple machine that speeded the processing of cotton. His **cotton gin** used a **spinning cylinder** to remove seeds from cotton fibers.

Before the introduction of the cotton gin, the seeds had to be picked out of the cotton fibers by hand. This was a slow process. Working by hand, a laborer could clean only a pound of cotton a day.

The cotton gin was revolutionary technology. A worker could process fifty times more cotton fiber with the gin than by hand. Cotton growing became far more profitable.

Slave Labor To grow more cotton, planters used more slave labor. In 1790, there were about 698,000 enslaved African Americans in the United States. By 1860, the census recorded nearly 4 million. During that time, the price of a slave increased ten or twenty times.

Cotton became the greatest source of wealth for the United States. It enriched planters in the South, as well as bankers and shipowners in the North. Cotton production rose at an astonishing rate. Planters grew one and a half million pounds of cotton in 1790. In 1820, they grew ten times as much.

Southern states were not all alike. States like Alabama and Mississippi, which depended on cotton, had large populations of enslaved people. Other states, such as Kentucky, devoted less attention to cotton. Fewer enslaved people lived there.

In the southern "Cotton Kingdom," society was dominated by owners of large plantations. This small but wealthy class lived in luxury and sent their children to the finest schools. But more than half of all southern farmers did not have slaves. They grew corn and raised hogs and chickens.

Defending Slavery Most southern whites accepted the system of slavery. Many feared that any weakening of controls over African Americans might encourage violent uprisings. By the 1830s, some people in the North were urging that slavery be banned. (You will read about the movement to end slavery in the next chapter.) In response, southern whites hardened their support for slavery.

Supporters of slavery said it was more humane than the free labor system of the North. Unlike northern factory workers, they argued, enslaved African Americans did not worry about unemployment.

Vocabulary Builder

devote (dee VOHT) v. to commit; to apply (time and energy, for example)

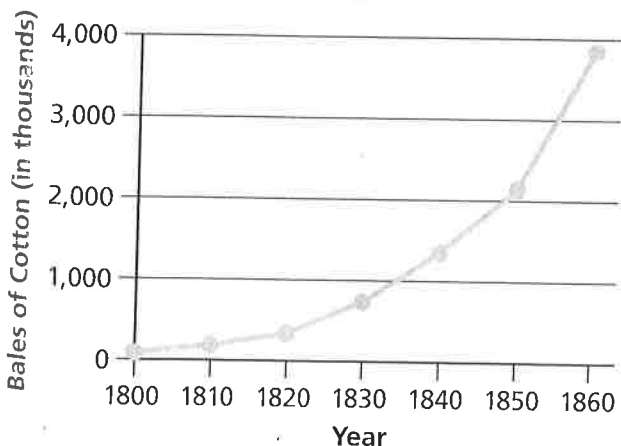


Explain Problems From the Past

Explain the disagreements between supporters and critics of slavery.

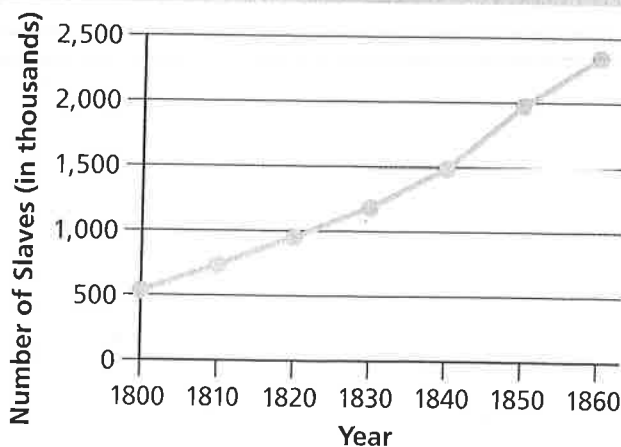
Cotton Production and Slavery

Cotton Production



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*

Growth of Slavery



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*

Reading Charts Skills Activity

The rise in cotton production in the South was paralleled by a rise in the number of enslaved African Americans.

(a) **Read Graphs** How much did cotton production increase between 1800

and 1850? In what 10-year period did slavery grow the fastest?

(b) **Make Predictions** If cotton production had decreased, would the number of slaves have declined? Explain your reasoning.

argued that northern workers were free to quit a job and take another if conditions became too harsh. Also, the critics said, people held in slavery often suffered physical or other abuse from white owners. There was no satisfactory substitute for freedom.

Checkpoint How widespread was slave ownership?

Main Idea

Whether free or enslaved, African Americans in the South were subject to harsh rules and unequal treatment.

African Americans in the South

Not all of the 4 million African Americans in the South were enslaved. About 253,000 (or 6 percent) were free. Many had purchased their freedom. A few did well, especially in cities like New Orleans. But most did not share in the prosperity around them.

Restrictions on Free African Americans Laws denied basic rights even to African Americans who were free. By law, they were excluded from all but the most menial jobs. Their children were denied the right to attend public schools. African Americans could not vote, serve on juries, or testify against white defendants in court.

Free African Americans were discouraged from traveling. In a petition, some described the conditions they faced:

“[When] we have occasion to . . . Travel . . . [b]y Steem boat or Stage, we have been exceedingly anoyd And put to very considerable inconvenience and eaven compeled to Leave the boat and thereby entirely defeated from accomplishing our just and lawful business because we have not [had] a certificate from some White person.”

—petition to Delaware legislature, 1850s

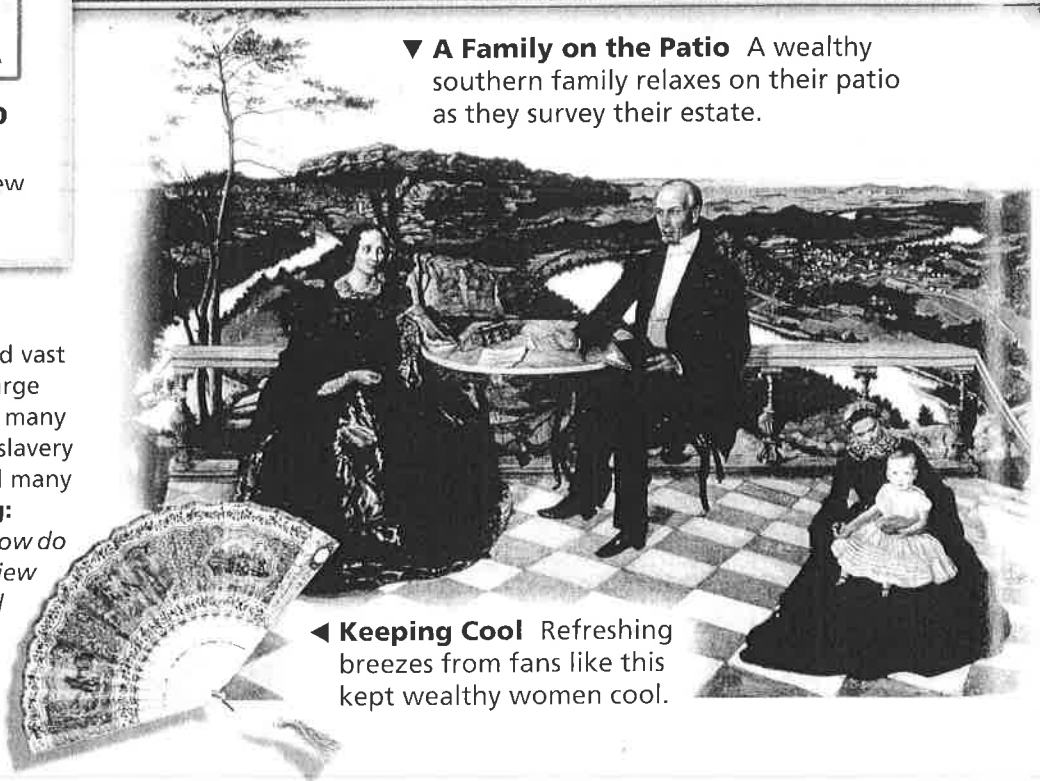


Explore More Video

To learn more about southern plantations, view the video.

Plantation Life Life on a southern plantation showed vast contrasts. The families of large plantation owners enjoyed many luxuries. Families bound to slavery experienced hard work and many cruelties. **Critical Thinking:** **Compare and Contrast** How do these pictures support the view that plantation owners and enslaved African Americans lived very different lives?

▼ **A Family on the Patio** A wealthy southern family relaxes on their patio as they survey their estate.



◀ **Keeping Cool** Refreshing breezes from fans like this kept wealthy women cool.

The freedom of African Americans in the South was never secure. Slave catchers prowled the streets looking for escapees. They often kidnapped free African Americans and sold them into slavery.

In spite of all the restrictions placed upon them, many free African Americans made valuable contributions to southern life. Norbert Rillieux revolutionized the sugar industry. His method of refining sugar made the process faster, safer, and less costly. Another African American inventor, Henry Blair, developed a seed-planting device that reduced the time a farmer spent sowing a crop.

Life Under Slavery For all the problems faced by free African Americans, those who were enslaved faced much greater trials. They had no rights at all. Laws known as *slave codes* controlled every aspect of their lives. As a Kentucky court ruled in 1828, "... a slave by our code is not treated as a person but as a ... thing. ..."

Many enslaved African Americans became skilled workers. Their skills kept the plantations operating efficiently. Others worked in the owners' homes as housekeepers, butlers, or nannies and became trusted house servants.

The vast majority did heavy farm labor. Most slaveholders stopped short of working a laborer to death. Some came close, however. On the large plantations, white overseers administered punishment—often a whipping—for many offenses.

Enslaved African Americans had only one real protection against mistreatment: Owners looked on them as valuable property that they needed to keep healthy and productive.

Families of enslaved African Americans were often broken apart when slave owners sold one or more of their family members. Many children had only the slightest memory of their parents.



◀ **A Family in the Fields**

Children worked in the fields with their enslaved parents. This Georgia family was picking cotton.

◀ **Bonds of Slavery**

Shackles such as these were used to restrain slaves who tried to escape or who otherwise displeased a master.



Nat Turner captured

Vocabulary Builder

revolt (ree VOHLT) *n.* uprising; rebellion

After 1808, it was illegal to import enslaved Africans to the United States. As a result, African Americans had little direct contact with Africa. Nevertheless, African customs, music, and dance survived in their daily lives from one generation to another.

Many African Americans found a message of hope in the Bible. African Americans composed spirituals, religious folk songs that blended biblical themes with the realities of slavery.

Resistance to Slavery Many African Americans did what they could to resist the slaveholders. Some worked slowly or pretended not to understand what they were told to do. Others deliberately broke farm equipment. The most daring fled north to freedom.

Sometimes, resistance became rebellion. Nat Turner led the most famous slave revolt in 1831. Turner said he had a vision that told him to kill whites. He and others killed about 60 whites. In reprisal, many innocent African Americans were executed.

Checkpoint How did enslaved African Americans adapt to slavery and resist it?

Looking Back and Ahead The more cotton they grew, the more southern planters depended on the labor of enslaved African Americans. At the same time, African Americans in the South struggled to endure or resist slavery. In the next section, you will read how the settling of western areas caused new tensions between North and South.

Section 3 | **Check Your Progress**

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) Summarize** How were northern textile mills and southern cotton plantations linked? What key invention deepened this connection?
(b) Understand Sequence Place the following events in the order in which they happened: population of cotton-producing states triples; Whitney invents the cotton gin; Nat Turner leads slave revolt; the need for slaves increases; northern textile factories have need for cotton; support for slavery hardens among southern whites.

- (a) Describe** What might a typical workday be like for an enslaved African American on a southern cotton plantation?
(b) Draw Conclusions Why do you think enslaved people rebelled, even though the risk was so great and the likelihood of success so small?

Reading Skill

- Explain Problems From the Past** Connect the problems facing southern planters and southern African Americans.

Vocabulary Builder

Answer the following questions in complete sentences that show your understanding of the key terms.

- How does the cotton gin work?
- How did slave codes control every aspect of the lives of enslaved African Americans?
- What would be a common theme of an African American spiritual?

Writing

- Based on what you have read in this section, list as many effects as you can that resulted from the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney. List the effects in the order in which they happened. If one effect led to another effect, draw an arrow between those two developments.