

The South



Essential Question

How important was slavery for the economy and society of the South?



About the Photo: Slaves processing sugarcane on a Georgia plantation

In this module you will learn how the South developed an agricultural economy and how that economy was dependent on the labor of enslaved people. You will also read about the role of slavery in Southern society.

▶ Explore ONLINE!



HISTORY.

VIDEOS, including...

- Growth of the Cotton Industry

- ✔ Document-Based Investigations
- ✔ Graphic Organizers
- ✔ Interactive Games
- ✔ Animation: The Cotton Gin
- ✔ Image with Hotspots: A Southern Plantation
- ✔ Image Carousel: Images of Slavery

What You Will Learn ...

Lesson 1: Growth of the Cotton Industry 452

The Big Idea The invention of the cotton gin made the South a one-crop economy and increased the need for slave labor.

Lesson 2: Southern Society. 459

The Big Idea Southern society centered around agriculture.

Lesson 3: Slavery in the South. 463

The Big Idea Enslaved people faced cruel treatment and difficult lives, which led them to resist the slave system and sometimes rebel.

United States

World

1790

1793 Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin. ▼



1794 France ends slavery in its colonies.

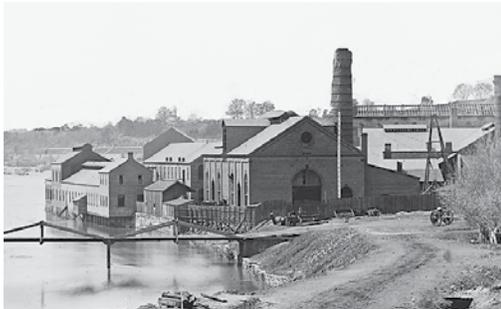
1807 Parliament bans the slave trade in the British Empire.

1808 A congressional ban on importing slaves into the United States takes effect.

1820

1831 Nat Turner's Rebellion leads to fears of further slave revolts in the South.

1835 Alexis de Tocqueville publishes *Democracy in America*.



1837 Victoria is crowned queen of Great Britain. ▼

1840

▲ 1848 Joseph R. Anderson becomes the owner of the Tredegar Iron Works, the South's only large iron factory.



1858 A treaty at Tianjin, China, gives Hong Kong to the United Kingdom.

1860

Reading Social Studies

THEME FOCUS:

Economics, Society and Culture

This module takes you into the heart of the South from 1800 through the mid-1800s. As you read, you will discover that the South depended on cotton as its economic backbone, especially after the invention of the cotton gin. You will also read about the slave system in the South during this time and about the harsh living conditions slaves endured. As you will see, the South was home to a variety of societies and cultures.

READING FOCUS:

Online Research

Researching history topics on the World Wide Web can give you access to valuable information. However, just because the information is on the web doesn't mean it is automatically valuable.

Evaluate Websites Before you use information you find online, you need to evaluate the website it comes from. The checklist below can help you determine if the site is worth your time.

Evaluate Websites

Site: _____ URL: _____ Date of access: _____

Rate each item on this 1–3 scale. Then add up the total score.

	No	Some	Yes
I. Authority			
a. Authors are clearly identified by name.	1	2	3
b. Contact information is provided for authors.	1	2	3
c. Authors' qualifications are clearly stated.	1	2	3
d. Site has been updated recently.	1	2	3
II. Content			
a. Site's information is useful to your project.	1	2	3
b. Information is clear and well organized.	1	2	3
c. Information appears to be at the right level.	1	2	3
d. Links to additional important information are provided.	1	2	3
e. Information can be verified in other sources.	1	2	3
f. Graphics are helpful, not just decorative.	1	2	3
III. Design and Technical Elements			
a. Pages are readable and easy to navigate.	1	2	3
b. Links to other sites work.	1	2	3

Total Score _____

36–28 = very good site 27–20 = average site below 20 = poor site

You Try It!

The passage below is from the module you are about to read.

Cotton Becomes Profitable Cotton had been grown in the New World for centuries, but it had not been a very profitable crop. Before cotton could be spun into thread for weaving into cloth, the seeds had to be removed from the cotton fibers.

Long-staple cotton, also called black-seed cotton, was fairly easy to process. Workers could pick the seeds from the cotton with relative ease. But long-staple cotton grew well in only a few places in the South. More common was short-staple cotton, which was also known as green-seed cotton. Removing the seeds from this cotton was difficult and time consuming. A worker could spend an entire day picking the seeds from a single pound of short-staple cotton.

After you read the passage, complete the following activity.

Suppose that after reading this passage you decide to do some research on cotton growing. You use a search engine that directs you to a website. At that site, you find the information described below. Using the evaluation criteria listed on the previous page, decide if this is a site you would recommend to others.

- a. The authors of the site are listed as “Bob and Mack, good friends who enjoy working together.”
- b. The site was last updated on “the last time we got together.”
- c. The title of the site is “Cotton Pickin’.” There are few headings.
- d. This ten-page site includes nine pages about the authors’ childhood on a cotton farm. No illustrations are included.
- e. Pages are very long, but they load quickly, as there are no graphics. There is one link to a site selling cotton clothing.

As you read Module 14, think about what topics would be interesting to research on the web. If you do some research on the web, remember to use the evaluation list to analyze websites.

Key Terms and People

Lesson 1

cotton gin
planters
cotton belt
factors
Tredegar Iron Works

Lesson 2

yeomen

Lesson 3

overseers
spirituals
oral tradition
folktales
Nat Turner

Growth of the Cotton Industry

The Big Idea

The invention of the cotton gin made the South a one-crop economy and increased the need for slave labor.

Main Ideas

- The invention of the cotton gin revived the economy of the South.
- The cotton gin created a cotton boom in which farmers grew little else.
- Some people encouraged southerners to focus on other crops and industries.

Key Terms and People

cotton gin
planters
cotton belt
factors
Tredegar Iron Works

If YOU were there . . .

You are a field-worker on a cotton farm in the South in about 1800. Your job is to separate the seeds from the cotton fibers. It is dull, tiring work because the tiny seeds are tangled in the fibers. Sometimes it takes you a whole day just to clean one pound of cotton! Now you hear that someone has invented a machine that can clean cotton 50 times faster than by hand.

How might this machine change your life?

Reviving the South's Economy

Sectional differences had always existed between different regions of the United States. The geographic features of each region contributed to the development of differing economic activities. Revolutionary changes in industry and transportation deepened the differences between North and South. While the North began to focus on industrialization, the South remained mainly agricultural.

Before the American Revolution, three crops dominated southern agriculture—tobacco, rice, and indigo. These crops played a central role in the southern economy and culture. They were produced mostly by enslaved African Americans.

After the American Revolution, however, prices for tobacco, rice, and indigo dropped. When crop prices fell, the demand for and the price of slaves also went down. In an effort to protect their incomes, many farmers tried, with little success, to grow other crops that needed less labor. Soon, however, cotton would transform the southern economy and greatly increase the demand for slave labor.

Cotton Becomes Profitable Cotton had been grown in the New World for centuries, but it had not been a very profitable crop. Before cotton could be spun into thread for weaving into cloth, the seeds had to be removed from the cotton fibers.

Cotton Gin

Connect to Science and Technology Eli Whitney's cotton gin enabled workers to easily remove seeds from cotton fibers. The result was a dramatic increase in cotton production in the South.

How did the cotton gin remove seeds from cotton fibers?



Long-staple cotton, also called black-seed cotton, was fairly easy to process. Workers could pick the seeds from the cotton with relative ease. But long-staple cotton grew well in only a few places in the South. More common was short-staple cotton, which was also known as green-seed cotton. Removing the seeds from this cotton was difficult and time consuming. A worker could spend an entire day picking the seeds from a single pound of short-staple cotton.

By the early 1790s the demand for American cotton began increasing rapidly. For instance, in Great Britain, new textile factories needed raw cotton that could be used for making cloth. American cotton producers could not keep up with the high demand for their cotton. These producers of cotton needed a machine that could remove the seeds from the cotton more rapidly.

Eli Whitney's Cotton Gin Northerner Eli Whitney finally patented such a machine in 1793. The year before, Whitney had visited a Georgia plantation owned by Catherine Greene. Workers there were using a machine that removed seeds from long-staple cotton. This machine did not work well on short-staple cotton. Greene asked Whitney if he could improve it. By the next spring, Whitney had perfected his design for the **cotton gin**, a machine that removes seeds from short-staple cotton. (*Gin* is short for "engine.") The cotton gin used a hand-cranked cylinder with wire teeth to pull cotton fibers from the seeds.

Whitney hoped to keep the design of the gin a secret, but the machine was very useful. His patent was often ignored by other manufacturers. Whitney described how his invention would improve the cotton business.

“One man will clean ten times as much cotton as he can in any other way before known and also clean it much better than in the usual mode [method]. This machine may be turned by water or with a horse, with the greatest ease, and one man and a horse will do more than fifty men with the old machines.”

—Eli Whitney, quoted in “Correspondence of Eli Whitney Relative to the Invention of the Cotton Gin,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 3

Reading Check
Draw Conclusions
What effects did the cotton gin have on the southern economy?

Whitney’s cotton gin revolutionized the cotton industry for **planters**. Planters were large-scale farmers who held more than 20 slaves. They built cotton gins that could process tons of cotton much faster than hand processing. A healthy crop almost guaranteed financial success because of high demand from the textile industry.

The Cotton Boom

Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin made cotton so profitable that southern farmers abandoned other crops in favor of growing cotton. The removal of Native Americans opened up more land. The development of new types of cotton plants helped spread cotton production throughout the South from Virginia and North Carolina to as far west as Texas. This area of high cotton production became known as the **cotton belt**.

Production increased rapidly—from about 2 million pounds in 1791 to roughly a billion pounds by 1860. As early as 1840, the United States was producing more than half of the cotton grown in the entire world. The economic boom attracted new settlers and built up wealth among wealthy white southerners. The cotton economy firmly put in place the institution of slavery in the South.

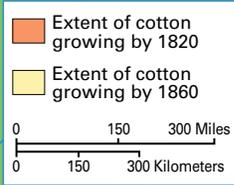
Cotton Belt Cotton had many advantages as a cash crop. It cost little to market. Unlike food staples, harvested cotton could be stored for a long time. Because cotton was lighter than other staple crops, it also cost less to transport long distances.

Farmers eager to profit from growing cotton headed west to find land. Farmers also began to apply scientific methods to improve crop production. Cotton had one disadvantage as a crop—it rapidly used up the nutrients in the soil. After a few years, cotton could make the land useless for growing anything. Some agricultural scientists recommended crop rotation—changing the crop grown on a particular plot of land every few years. Different crops needed different nutrients, so crop rotation would keep the land fertile longer. Other agricultural scientists began to study soil chemistry, in an effort to keep the land rich and productive.

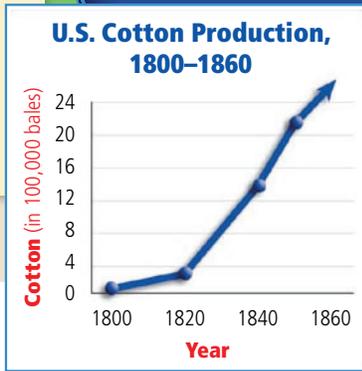
As the cotton belt grew, farmers continued trying to improve the crop. Agricultural scientists worked at crossbreeding short-staple cotton with other varieties. As a result, new stronger types of cotton were soon growing throughout the cotton belt. This led to expansion of the cotton industry through the 1860s.

The cotton boom involved much more than growing and harvesting cotton. Harvested cotton had to be ginned, pressed into bales, and then

The Cotton Kingdom



After the invention of the cotton gin, the amount of cotton produced each year in the United States soared, as the chart shows. The area of land devoted to growing cotton also increased dramatically between 1820 and 1860, as shown on the map.



Analyze Information

1. In what region of the United States was the cotton belt?
2. How many bales of cotton were produced in 1860?

shipped to market or to warehouses. Special agents helped do everything. They helped market cotton to customers and also insured crops against loss or damage. Factories were built to produce items needed by cotton farmers, such as ropes to bale cotton.

Growing and harvesting cotton required many field hands. Rather than pay wages to free workers, planters began to use more slave labor. Congress had made bringing slaves into the United States illegal in 1808. However, the growing demand for slaves led to an increase in the slave trade within the United States.

Cotton Trade In an 1858 speech before the U.S. Senate, South Carolina politician James Henry Hammond declared, “Cotton is King!” Without cotton, Hammond claimed, the global economy would fail. He believed that southern cotton was one of the most valuable resources in the world.

The South's Cotton Economy

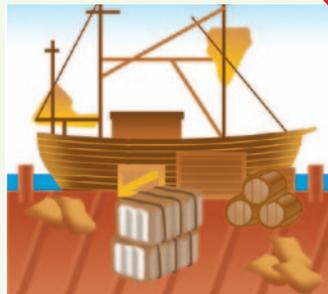
Eli Whitney's cotton gin began the cotton boom. Soon, the Cotton Kingdom stretched across the South. For the cotton planters to succeed, they had to get their cotton to market.



Enslaved African Americans did most of the planting, harvesting, and processing of cotton.



Cotton was shipped on river steamboats to major ports such as Charleston.



From southern ports, ships carried the cotton to distant textile mills.



A large amount of cotton was sold to textile mills in the northeastern United States.



Textile mills in Great Britain were the largest foreign buyers of southern cotton.

Draw Conclusions

Why do you think cotton was so important to the South's economy?

Southern cotton was used to make cloth in England and the North. Many southerners shared Hammond's viewpoints about cotton. Southerner David Christy declared, "King cotton is a profound [learned] statesman, and knows what measures will best sustain [protect] his throne."

The cotton boom made the South a major player in world trade. Great Britain became the South's most valued foreign trading partner. Southerners also sold tons of cotton to the growing textile industry in the northeastern United States. This increased trade led to the growth of major port cities in the South, including Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Reading Check
Identify Cause and Effect What effect did the cotton boom have on the slave trade within the United States?

Academic Vocabulary
primary main, most important

In these cities, crop brokers called **factors** managed the cotton trade. Farmers sold their cotton to merchants, who then made deals with the factors. Merchants and factors also arranged loans for farmers who needed to buy supplies. They often advised farmers on how to invest profits. Once farmers got their cotton to the port cities, factors arranged for transportation aboard trading ships.

However, shipping cotton by land to port cities was very difficult in the South. The few major road projects at the time were limited to the Southeast. Most southern farmers had to ship their goods on the region's rivers. On the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, flatboats and steamboats carried cotton and other products to port. Eventually, hundreds of steamboats traveled up and down the mighty Mississippi River each day.

Other Crops and Industries

While industrialization continued to grow in the North, some leaders worried that the South was depending too much on cotton. They wanted southerners to try a variety of cash crops and investments.

Food and Cash Crops One such crop was corn, the **primary** southern food crop. By the late 1830s the top three corn-growing states in the nation were all in the South. The South's other successful food crops included rice, sweet potatoes, wheat, and sugarcane.

Production of tobacco, the South's first major cash crop, was very time consuming. Tobacco leaves had to be cured, or dried, before they could be shipped to market. In 1839 a slave discovered a way to improve the drying process by using heat from burning charcoal. This new, faster curing process increased tobacco production.

Partly as a result of the cotton boom, hemp and flax also became major cash crops. Their fibers were used to make rope and sackcloth. Farmers used the rope and sackcloth to bundle cotton into bales.

Industry Many of the first factories in the South were built to serve farmers' needs by processing crops such as sugarcane. In 1803 the nation's first steam-powered sawmill was built in Donaldsonville, Louisiana. This new technology enabled lumber companies to cut, sort, and clean wood quickly.

By the 1840s entrepreneurs in Georgia began investing in cotton mills. In 1840 there were 14 cotton mills. By the mid-1850s there were more than 50. A few mill owners followed the model established by Francis Cabot Lowell. However, most built small-scale factories on the falls of a river for waterpower. A few steam-powered mills were built in towns without enough waterpower.

Southerners such as Hinton Rowan Helper encouraged industrial growth in the South.

“We should . . . keep pace with the progress of the age. We must expand our energies, and acquire habits of enterprise and industry; we should rouse ourselves from the couch of lassitude [laziness] and inure [set] our minds to thought and our bodies to action.”

—Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*

Tredegar Iron Works
After Joseph Anderson took over the Tredegar Iron Works in 1848, it became the largest manufacturer of iron products in the South.



Joseph R. Anderson followed Helper's advice. In 1848 Anderson became the owner of the **Tredegar Iron Works** in Richmond, Virginia. It was one of the most productive ironworks in the nation. It was the only factory in the South to produce products such as cannons, steam engines, and bridge materials.

Unlike in the North, however, industry remained a small part of the southern economy. Southern industry faced stiff competition from the North and from England, both of which could produce many goods more cheaply. And as long as agricultural profits remained high, southern investors preferred to invest in land.

Summary and Preview You have read about how southern farmers worked to improve farming methods. In the next lesson you will read about the structure of southern society.

Reading Check

Make Inferences

Why were there fewer industries in the South?

Lesson 1 Assessment

Review Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Describe** How did the cotton gin make processing cotton easier?

b. Draw Conclusions Why had slavery been on the decline before the invention of the cotton gin? How did slavery change as a result of the cotton gin?

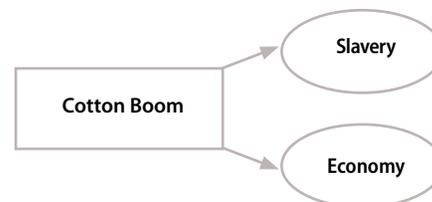
c. Predict How might the rise of cotton production and slavery affect southern society?
- a. Identify** What areas of the United States made up the cotton belt?

b. Evaluate Do you think the South should have paid more attention to its industrial growth? Why?
- a. Describe** What other crops and industries were encouraged in the South?

b. Make Inferences Why were some southern leaders worried about the South's reliance on cotton?

Critical Thinking

- Identify Cause and Effect** In this lesson you learned about the causes of the cotton boom. Create a graphic organizer similar to the one below and add to it to identify the effects of the cotton boom on the South.



Southern Society

The Big Idea

Southern society centered around agriculture.

Main Ideas

- Southern society and culture consisted of four main groups.
- Free African Americans in the South faced a great deal of discrimination.

Key Terms and People

yeomen

If YOU were there . . .

Your family owns a small farm in Georgia in the 1840s. Sometimes you work in the fields, but more often you tend the vegetable garden and peach orchard. Since you have no close neighbors, you look forward to Sundays. Going to church gives you a chance to socialize with other young people. Sometimes you wonder what it would be like to live in a city like Savannah.

How would life be different if you left the farm for the city?

Southern Society and Culture

Although the South had some industry, the economy was not primarily industrial as it was in the North. Agriculture was the heart of the southern economy, and cotton was king.

Popular fiction often made it seem that all white southerners had many slaves and lived on large plantations. Many fiction writers wrote about wealthy southern families who had frequent, grand parties. The ideal image of the Antebellum (before the war) South included hospitality and well-treated slaves on beautiful plantations that almost ran themselves.

This romantic view was far from the reality. During the first half of the 1800s, only about one-third of white southern families had slaves. Fewer families had plantations. Despite their small numbers, these planters had a powerful influence over the South. Many served as political leaders. They led a society made up of many different kinds of people, including yeoman farmers, poor whites, slaves, and free African Americans. Each of these segments of society contributed to the economic success of the South.

Planters As the wealthiest members of southern society, planters also greatly influenced the economy. Some showed off their wealth by living in beautiful mansions. Many others chose to live more simply. A visitor described wealthy planter

Alexander Stephens's estate as "an old wooden house" surrounded by weeds. Some planters saved all of their money to buy more land and slaves.

Male planters were primarily concerned with raising crops and supervising slave laborers. They left the running of the plantation household to their wives. The planter's wife oversaw the raising of the children and supervised the work of all slaves within the household. Slave women typically cooked, cleaned, and helped care for the planter's children. Wives also took on the important social duties of the family. For example, many southern leaders discussed political issues at the dances and dinners hosted by their wives.

Planters often arranged their children's marriages based on business interests. Lucy Breckinridge, the daughter of a wealthy Virginia planter, was married by arrangement in 1865. Three years earlier, she had described in her journal how she dreaded the very thought of marriage. "A woman's life after she is married, unless there is an immense amount of love, is nothing but suffering and hard work." How Breckinridge's life in her own arranged marriage would have turned out cannot be known. She died of typhoid fever just months after her wedding.

A Southern Plantation

A typical plantation had fields as well as many buildings where different work was done. This picture shows some of the more important buildings that were a part of the plantation system.



Slave Cabins Slaves lived crowded together in small cabins. Cabins were crude, wooden structures with dirt floors.

Fields

Barn

Warehouse

Cotton-Ginning Shed This sizable plantation had several large cotton gins. The vital machines were housed in a shed to protect them from the weather.

Overseer's House

Smokehouse

Plantation House The planter and his family lived in the plantation house. The planter's wife was in charge of running the household.

Stable

Analyze Visuals

How can you tell that the owner of this plantation was wealthy?

Yeomen and Poor Whites Most white southerners were **yeomen**, owners of small farms. Yeomen owned few slaves or none at all. The typical farm averaged 100 acres. Yeomen took great pride in their work. In 1849 a young Georgia man wrote, “I desire above all things to be a ‘Farmer.’ It is the most honest, upright, and sure way of securing all the comforts of life.”

Yeoman families, including women and children, typically worked long days at a variety of tasks. Some yeomen held a few slaves but worked alongside them.

The poorest of white southerners lived on land that could not grow cash crops. They survived by hunting, fishing, raising small gardens, and doing odd jobs for money.

Religion and Society Most white southerners shared similar religious beliefs. Because of the long distances between farms, families often saw their neighbors only at church events, such as revivals or socials. Rural women often played volunteer roles in their churches. Wealthy white southerners thought that their religion justified their position in society and the institution of slavery. They argued that God created some people, like themselves, to rule others. This belief opposed many northern Christians’ belief that God was against slavery.

Urban Life Many of the largest and most important cities in the South were strung along the Atlantic coast and had begun as shipping centers. Although fewer in number, the southern cities were similar to northern cities. City governments built public water systems and provided well-maintained streets. Public education was available in a few places. Wealthy residents occasionally gave large sums of money to charities, such as orphanages and public libraries. Southern urban leaders wanted their cities to appear as modern as possible.

As on plantations, slaves did much of the work in southern cities. Slaves worked as domestic servants, in mills, in shipyards, and at skilled jobs. Many business leaders held slaves or hired them from nearby plantations.

Free African Americans and Discrimination

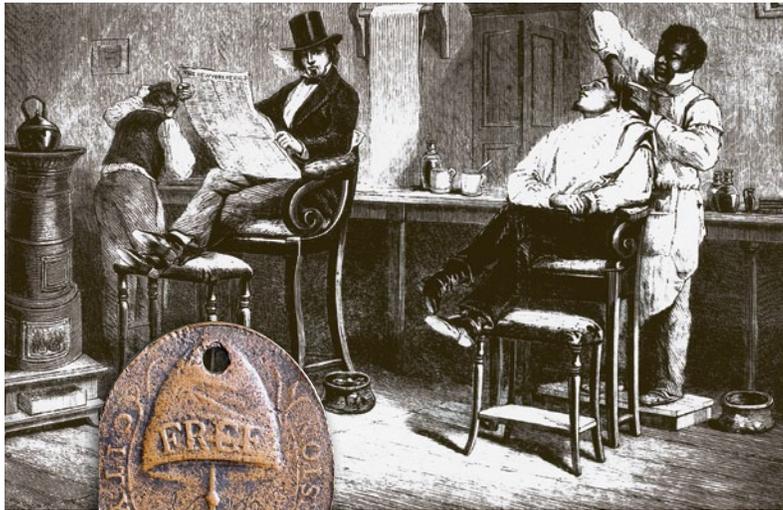
Although the vast majority of African Americans in the South were enslaved, more than 250,000 free African Americans lived in the region by 1860. Some were descendants of slaves who were freed after the American Revolution. Others were descendants of refugees from the Haitian Revolution led by Toussaint Louverture in the late 1790s. Still others were former slaves who had run away, been freed by their slaveholder, or earned enough money to buy their freedom.

Free African Americans lived in both rural and urban areas. Most lived in the countryside and worked as paid laborers on plantations or farms. Free African Americans in cities often worked a variety of jobs, mostly as skilled artisans. Some, like barber William Johnson of Natchez, Mississippi, became quite successful in their businesses. Frequently, free African Americans, especially those in the cities, formed social and economic ties with one another. Churches often served as the center of their social lives.

Reading Check

Summarize

What different groups made up southern society?



Free African Americans in the South

In 1860 about 1 out of 50 African Americans in the South was free. Many worked in skilled trades, like this barber in Richmond, Virginia. In Charleston, South Carolina, a system of badges was set up to distinguish between free African Americans and slaves.

How would the work of the free African American in this picture be different from that of slaves in the South?

Free African Americans faced constant discrimination from white southerners. Many governments passed laws limiting the rights of free African Americans. Most free African Americans could not vote, travel freely, or hold certain jobs. In some places, free African Americans had to have a white person represent them in any business transaction. In others, laws restricted where they were allowed to live or conduct business.

Many white southerners argued that free African Americans did not have the ability to take care of themselves. Southerners used this belief to justify the institution of slavery. “The status of slavery is the only one for which the African is adapted,” wrote one white Mississippian. To many white southerners, the very existence of free African Americans threatened the institution of slavery.

Summary and Preview Southern society was led by rich planters but included groups of small farmers, slaves, and free African Americans as well. These groups each had their own culture. In the next lesson you will read about life under slavery.

Reading Check

Find Main Ideas What challenges did free African Americans face in the South?

Lesson 2 Assessment

Review Ideas, Terms, and People

- Identify** What was the largest social group in the South? How did its members make a living?
 - Compare** In what ways were southern cities similar to northern cities?
 - Elaborate** Which southern social class do you think had the most difficult life? Why?
- Describe** What jobs were available to free African Americans in the South? Why were these jobs the only ones available?
 - Analyze** Why did many white southerners fear free African Americans?
 - Elaborate** Why do you think that discrimination against free African Americans was harsher in the South than in the North?

Critical Thinking

- Compare and Contrast** In this lesson you learned about the different groups of people who lived in the South. Create a graphic organizer similar to the one below to identify the similarities and differences of the lives of planters, yeomen, and free African Americans.

	Similarities	Differences
Planters		
Free African Americans		
Yeomen		

Slavery in the South

The Big Idea

Enslaved people faced cruel treatment and difficult lives, which led them to resist the slave system and sometimes rebel.

Main Ideas

- Slaves faced harsh living conditions in the South.
- A common African American culture developed in the South, which helped slaves to survive the cruelties of slavery.
- Slave rebellions drew a harsh response from white southerners.

Key Terms and People

overseers
spirituals
oral tradition
folktales
Nat Turner

If YOU were there . . .

You are an enslaved person living on a large cotton plantation in the South in the 1850s. You work in the hot sun all day long picking cotton. After working in the fields, your body aches from bending over, your hands hurt from picking the cotton, and you're hungry from having little to eat. To take your mind off of your harsh life and to bring you comfort, you make up stories and poems. Your family and friends love to gather round to hear you tell these stories.

What is a story you think you would tell?

Living Under Slavery

Eli Whitney's cotton gin made cotton growing very profitable. Soon, cotton farming spread across the South. Since it required a lot of labor to grow cotton, the need for enslaved people grew as the number of cotton farms increased. By the mid-1800s, enslaved African Americans accounted for about one-third of the population of the South.

Differences existed in the lives of enslaved people. Where they lived, the work they did, and how they were treated all affected their day-to-day lives.

Working Life Work was the dominant feature of the lives of enslaved people. Men, women, and children were forced to work whenever their slaveholders demanded. For most slaves this meant every day of their lives from sunrise to sunset. Even sickness and poor weather rarely served as reasons to stop working.

The majority of enslaved people lived and worked on farms or large plantations in the South, where cotton was the leading crop. The majority of slaves worked as field hands. They planted, tended, picked, and processed cotton. They also cleared land, repaired buildings and fences, and performed many of the other tasks needed to keep the farms and plantations running. Slaves who worked outside were supervised



Enslaved African American house servants often cared for the children of slaveholders.

by **overseers**. These were men that farmers and planters hired to watch over and direct the work of slaves. Other slaves worked in the plantation owners' homes. They performed a wide variety of servant duties, such as cooking, cleaning, and child care. Some enslaved people had learned a trade. They worked as bricklayers, blacksmiths, and carpenters.

Not all enslaved people worked on plantations. In cities, some worked as domestic servants, skilled craftspeople, factory hands, and day laborers. Some were hired out and allowed to keep part of their earnings. But they were still enslaved—under the law, they were considered property.

Living Conditions Enslaved African Americans who worked in the fields on plantations usually lived in terrible conditions. They were housed in tiny cabins with leaky roofs and dirt floors. The food and clothing they were given were equally as poor. When they were sick, they rarely, if ever, received medical care.

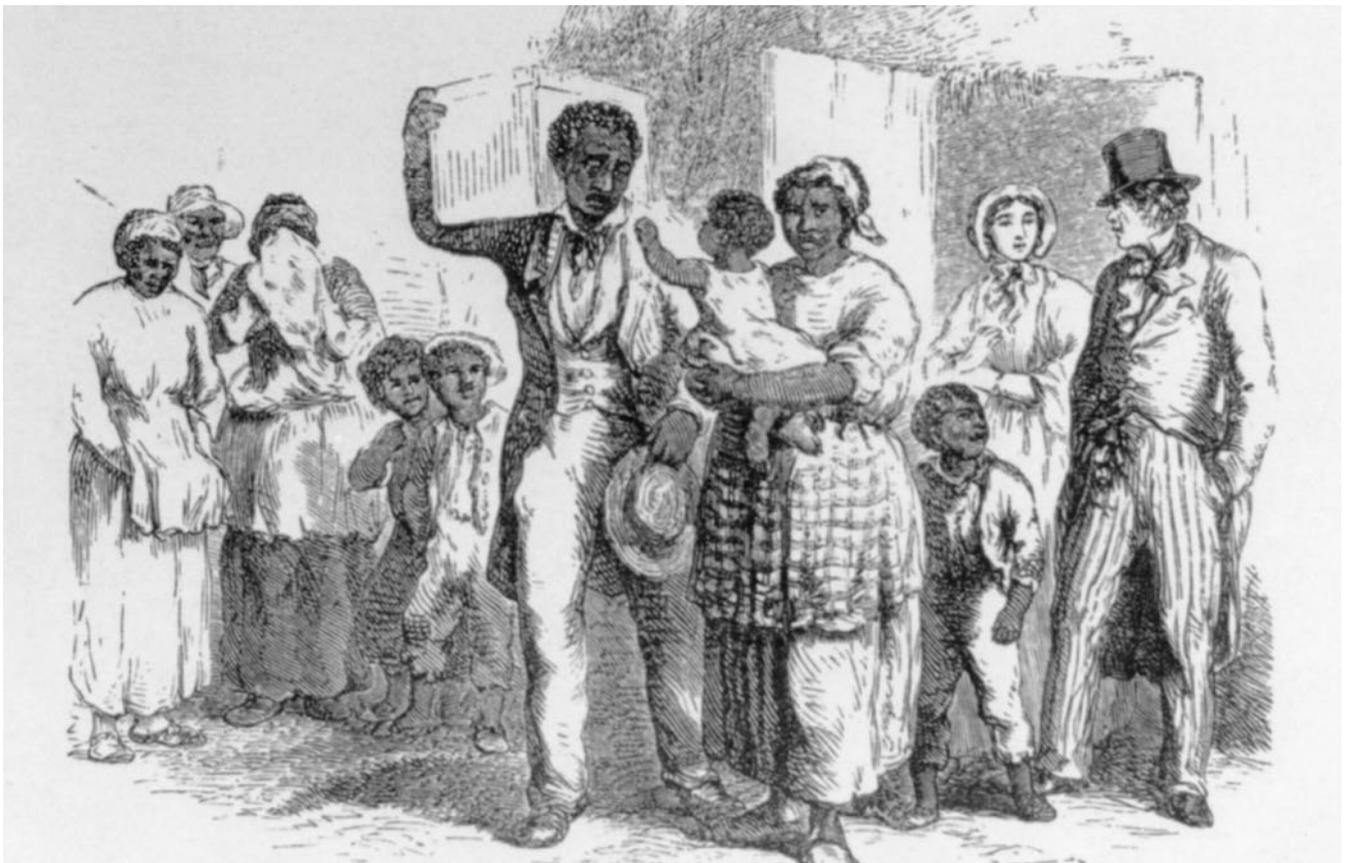
Some slaveholders provided better living conditions than others. Generally, they did this to gain obedience, not out of a sense of compassion. Most slaveholders, however, treated their slaves harshly. They used a wide variety of punishments to ensure obedience, including beatings, withholding food, and threatening family members. Wes Brady recalled the punishments faced by field hands:

“The overseer was 'straddle his big horse at three o'clock in the mornin', roustin' the hands off to the field. . . . The rows was a mile long and no matter how much grass was in them, if you [left] one sprig on your row they [beat] you nearly to death.”

—Wes Brady, quoted in *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938*

Enslaved people often lived in small cabins with dirt floors.





An African American father is sold away from his family.

Perhaps the cruelest part of slavery was the sale of family members away from one another. Although some slaveholders would not separate mothers from children, many did, causing unforgettable grief. When enslaved families could manage to be together, they took comfort in family life. Enslaved people did marry each other, although their marriages were not legally recognized. They tried to raise children while knowing that their children could be taken from them and sold at any time. Abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who was born into slavery, recalled visits from his mother, who lived 12 miles away.

“I do not recollect [remember] ever seeing my mother by the light of day. She was with me in the night. She would lie down with me, and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone.”

—Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

Douglass’s mother resisted slavery by the simple act of visiting her child. Douglass later rebelled by escaping to the North. By and large, the vast majority of enslaved people resisted slavery in one way or another.

A Common Culture

By the early 1800s, a distinctive African American culture had emerged in the South. This common culture was based on strong religious convictions, close personal bonds, and music that accompanied almost every part of life. It helped enslaved African Americans to endure the hardships of plantation life.

Reading Check
Summarize How did slaveholders treat enslaved people?

Finding Strength in Religion Religion was a cornerstone of African American culture in the South. By the early 1800s, a large number of slaves practiced Christianity. Some slaveholders tried to use religion to force enslaved people to accept mistreatment. They emphasized such Bible passages as “Servants, obey your masters.” But slaves took their own messages from the Bible. They were particularly inspired by the book of Exodus, which tells of Moses leading the Hebrews out of bondage in Egypt. Many enslaved African Americans believed that this story offered a message of hope for their own people.



Plantation Burial

The English artist John Antrobus painted this work in 1860. Antrobus lived in the United States for about eight years. *Plantation Burial* was part of a series of paintings he planned to create about life in rural Louisiana.

Slaves developed their own form of Christianity, which mixed in features of their traditional African religions. The practice of religion became a way for slaves to resist the power and control that slaveholders wielded over them. So, they worshipped in secret, often at night under the cover of darkness.

Enslaved African Americans often expressed their beliefs in **spirituals**—folk songs that mixed African and European music and were often religious in nature. Singing spirituals offered comfort for pain, eased the drudgery of daily work, and bound people together at religious meetings. Many spirituals voiced the desire for freedom:

“Dear Lord! dear Lord! when slavery’ll cease,
Then we poor souls can have our peace;
There’s a better day coming, will you go along with me?
There’s a better day coming, go sound the jubilee.”

—from *The Anti-Slavery Harp*, compiled by William W. Brown

Sometimes, spirituals contained coded messages about a planned escape or a plantation owner’s unexpected return. African American spirituals had a strong influence on later developments in American music, such as gospel, blues, and jazz.

An Oral Tradition Another feature of African American culture was **oral tradition**—the passing on of stories, poems, and songs by word of mouth. In this way enslaved African Americans kept their heritage alive by passing down family histories and African traditions and customs. **Folktales**, or stories with a moral, also were part of this oral tradition. These tales usually included animals with human characteristics. Most often a smaller animal, such as a rabbit, would defeat a bigger, stronger animal, such as a bear, fox, or wolf, by outwitting it.

The rabbit represented slaves. The moral of the folktales was that slaves could survive by outsmarting the slaveholder, who was represented by the more powerful animal. In some tales, however, the bigger animal outsmarted the rabbit. This reflected how slaveholders sometimes lied to and deceived slaves. Such stories served as a warning that slaves should be very careful about trusting slaveholders.

Other Challenges to Slavery In small ways, and on a daily basis, slaves resisted the slave system and tried to gain a measure of control over their lives. Some worked slowly or damaged equipment or crops to protest

Reading Check

Make Inferences

Why might slaves be inspired by the biblical story of Moses?

increased hours in the fields. Others ran away for a few days to visit family members or to avoid an angry slaveholder. Sometimes, slaves tried to escape to the North. But this journey to freedom was long and difficult. If they were captured, the punishment was flogging or, sometimes, death. Even so, thousands of enslaved people succeeded in getting to the North.

Slave Rebellions

Armed rebellion by enslaved persons was the most extreme form of resistance to slavery. Gabriel Prosser planned an attack on Richmond, Virginia, in 1800. In 1822 Denmark Vesey planned a revolt in Charleston, South Carolina. Both plots were betrayed, and the leaders, as well as numerous followers, were hanged.

The most famous rebellion was led by **Nat Turner** in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831. Turner planned to gain freedom by killing slaveholders and their families. On August 21, Turner gathered about 70 followers and encouraged them with these words:

“We do not go forth for the sake of blood and carnage; . . . Remember that ours is not a war for robbery, . . . it is a struggle for freedom.”

—Nat Turner, quoted in *History of the Negro Race in America, 1619–1880*, by George Washington Williams

BIOGRAPHY

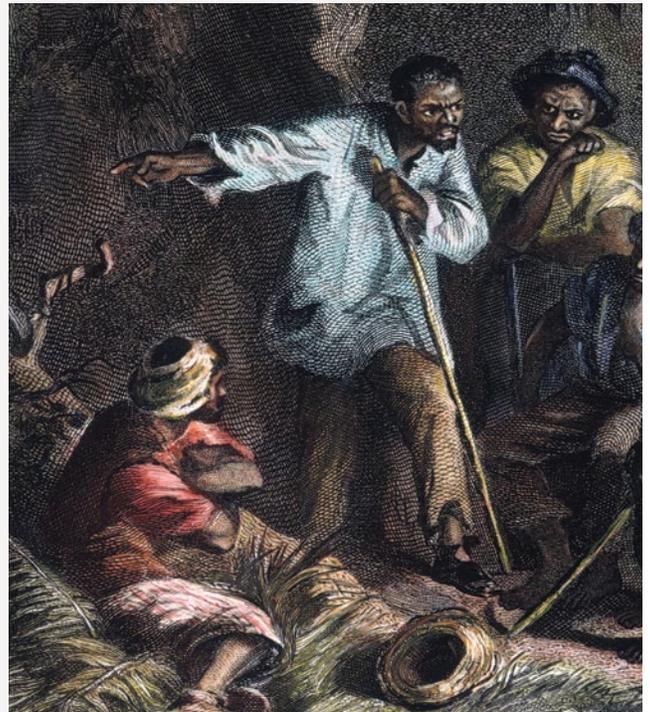
Nat Turner 1800–1831

Nat Turner was born into slavery in Virginia. As a child, he learned to read and write and became an enthusiastic reader of the Bible. He soon gained a reputation in the local slave community for his religious beliefs. Enslaved people regularly gathered in forest clearings to listen to his powerful sermons.

Turner believed that he had been called by God to free the slaves, by armed rebellion if necessary. When a solar eclipse took place in August 1831, he interpreted it as a sign that it was time to revolt. In an account of events that he dictated to a white lawyer before his execution, Turner defended the justice of his cause. He was a “prophet,” he claimed, called by God to commit his violent acts.

Analyze Points of View

How did Turner justify his rebellion?



Nat Turner meets with a group of followers in the woods.

Turner and his followers killed about 55 white men, women, and children. The rebellion was quickly put down. Most of Turner's men were captured when their ammunition ran out, and some were killed. Dozens of innocent slaves who played no part in the uprising also were put to death. Turner managed to evade capture for six weeks. After he was caught, he was tried and hanged.

Turner's rebellion spread fear throughout the South. Whites killed hundreds of African Americans in revenge. The state of Virginia even considered ending slavery because of the upheaval, but the proposal was narrowly defeated. Most southern state legislatures, however, passed harsh laws that further restricted the limited freedoms of both enslaved and free African Americans. For African Americans in the South, the grip of slavery grew ever tighter.

Summary and Preview Enslaved African Americans adopted many ways to adapt to and resist the harsh conditions of slavery. Some attempted to end slavery by rebellion, but they failed. In the next module you will review the origins and development of slavery in the United States.

Reading Check

Find Main Ideas

How did white southerners respond to Nat Turner's Rebellion?

Lesson 3 Assessment

Review Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** What types of work did enslaved people in cities do?

b. Summarize What challenges did enslaved families face?
- a. Recall** What forms did resistance to slavery take?

b. Explain How were enslaved African Americans able to keep their African heritage alive?
- a. Describe** Who was Nat Turner, and how did he resist slavery?

b. Make Inferences How do you think the actions of Nat Turner affected the lives of enslaved African Americans who did not join his cause?

Critical Thinking

- Categorize** In this lesson you learned about the hardships faced by enslaved people. Create a graphic organizer similar to the one below to identify how the following characteristics of their culture helped them respond to their conditions and endure their hardships.

Religion	
Spirituals	
Oral Tradition	

Social Studies Skills

Interpret Graphs

Define the Skill

Graphs are drawings that classify and display data in a clear, visual format. There are three basic types of graphs. *Line graphs* and *bar graphs* plot changes in quantities over time. Bar graphs are also used to compare quantities within a category at a particular time. *Circle graphs*, also called *pie graphs*, have a similar use. The circle represents the whole of something, and the slices show what proportion of the whole is made by each part.

Graphs allow you to see and understand patterns and relationships more easily than you can in information delivered in tables or text. This is especially true if the information is detailed or the relationships are complicated.

Learn the Skill

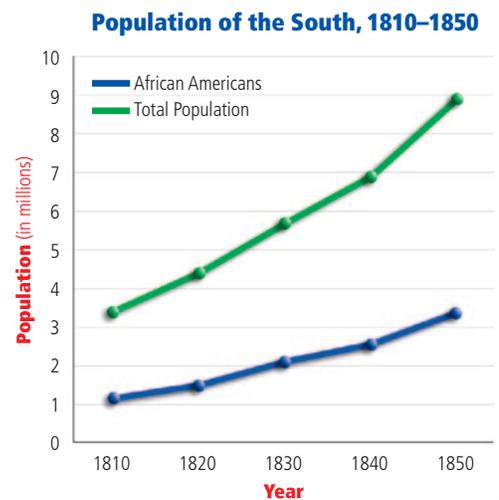
The following guidelines will help you interpret data that is presented as a graph.

1. Read the title to identify the subject and purpose of the graph. Note the type of graph, remembering what each type is designed to indicate. Also note how the graph's subject relates to any printed material that accompanies it.
2. Study the graph's parts. Pay close attention to the labels that define each axis. Note the units of measure. Identify the categories used. If there are different colors on bars or lines in the graph, determine what those differences mean.
3. Analyze the data in the graph. Note any increases or decreases in quantities. Look for trends, changes, and other relationships in the data.

4. Apply the information in the graph. Use the results of your analysis to draw conclusions. Ask yourself what generalizations can be made about the trends, changes, or relationships shown in the graph.

Practice the Skill

The graph below is a double-line graph. It shows both changes and relationships over time. This type of graph allows you to see how changes in one thing compare with changes in something else. Apply the guidelines to interpret the graph and answer the questions that follow.



1. What is shown on each axis of this graph? What are the units of measure on each axis?
2. What does each of the lines represent?
3. What was the total population of the South in 1810? in 1850? By how much did the African American population grow during that period?
4. Was the white population or the African American population growing faster? Explain how you know.

Module 14 Assessment

Review Vocabulary, Terms, and People

Match the definition in the left column with the correct term in the right column.

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. A region of cotton-producing areas that stretched from South Carolina to Texas | a. cotton belt |
| 2. Emotional songs that mixed African and European music and expressed religious beliefs | b. factors |
| 3. Owners of small farms who made up the largest social class in the South | c. planters |
| 4. Crop brokers who often managed the cotton trade in the South | d. spirituals |
| 5. Wealthy farmers and plantation owners | e. yeomen |

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

Lesson 1

6. a. **Describe** How did the cotton gin lead to a cotton boom in the South?
- b. **Analyze** What were the positive and negative results of the cotton boom?
- c. **Evaluate** Do you think that the South suffered as a result of its reliance on cotton? Why or why not?

Lesson 2

7. a. **Describe** What three groups made up white southern society?
- b. **Compare and Contrast** In what ways were the lives of free African Americans and white southerners similar and different?
- c. **Predict** What might have been the attitude of yeomen and poor white southerners toward slavery? Why?

Lesson 3

8. a. **Identify** What are some small ways in which enslaved people tried to challenge the slave system?
- b. **Analyze Information** What were some ways that enslaved people sent messages or warnings to one another?
- c. **Make Inferences** How did religion and family help enslaved people cope with their lives?

Reading Skills

Online Research Use the Reading Skills taught in this module to answer the question below.

9. Which of the following would be the best website to find information about life in the South before the Civil War?
- a. a Civil War historian's homepage
- b. a collection of autobiographies written by slaves
- c. a site with information about how to grow cotton
- d. a collection of biographies of inventors

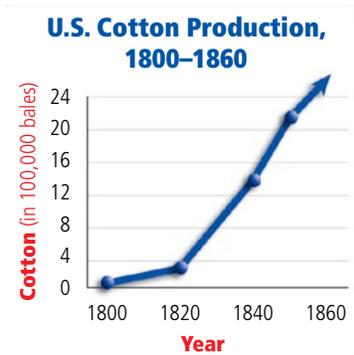
Review Themes

10. **Society and Culture** How were the different social classes in the South affected by the cotton boom?
11. **Economics** How did the cotton boom affect the economy of the South?

Module 14 Assessment, continued

Social Studies Skills

Interpret Graphs Use the Social Studies Skills taught in this module to answer the questions about the graph below.



12. What span of time saw the largest increase in cotton production?
- 1800 to 1820
 - 1820 to 1840
 - 1840 to 1860
 - after 1860

13. About what year did cotton production reach 1.2 million bales per year?
- 1800
 - 1820
 - 1840
 - 1860

Focus on Writing

14. **Write a Biographical Sketch** In this module you learned about life in the South during the first half of the 1800s. List what you learned about living on a large cotton farm in the South and then choose an imaginary person to write about. Think about what life would have been like for this person. What might he or she have looked like? How might he or she have spoken? What might a typical day have been like? Once you have answered these questions, write two paragraphs about a day in the life of this person.

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