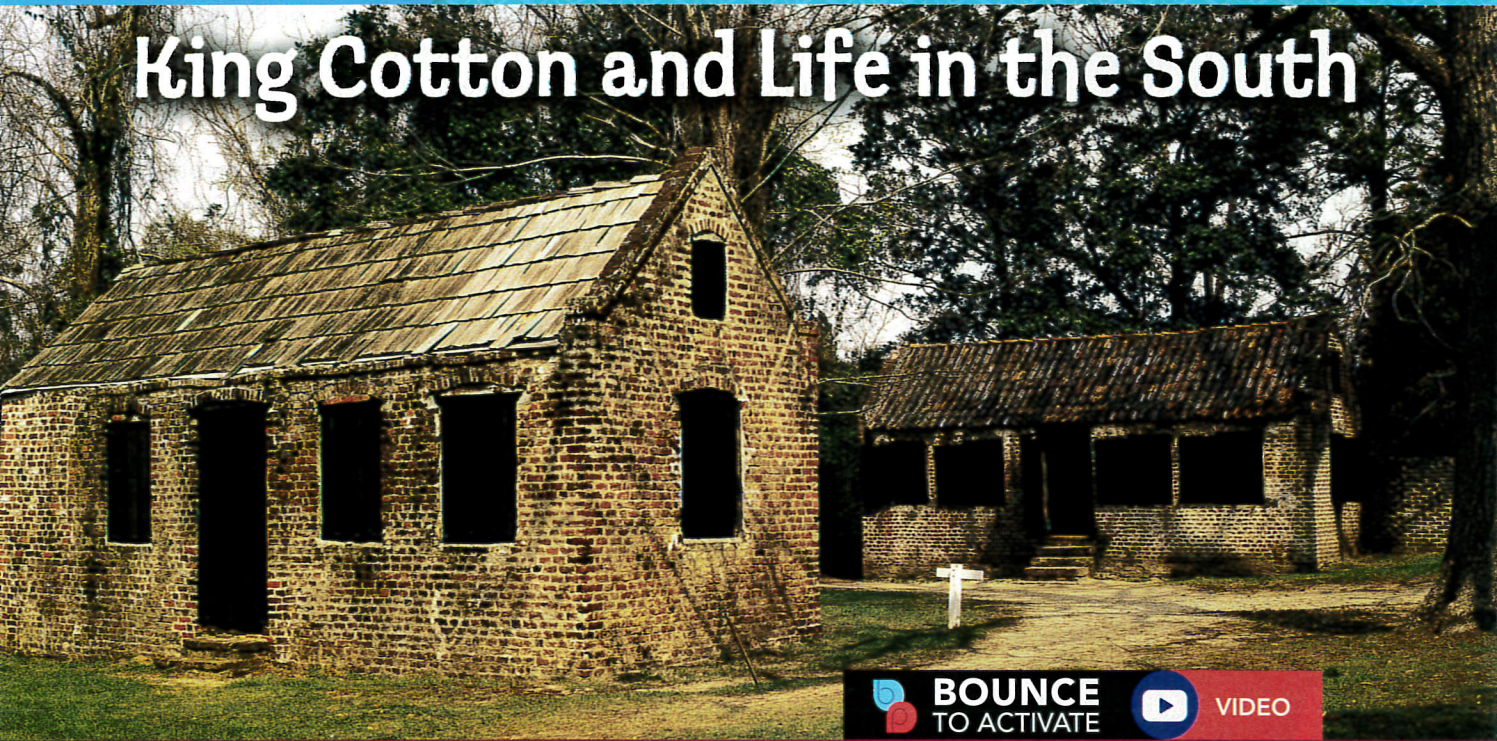


LESSON 3

King Cotton and Life in the South



BOUNCE
TO ACTIVATE



VIDEO

GET READY TO READ

START UP

Look at the cabins of enslaved people in the photograph. Describe what life might have been like for enslaved African Americans.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How did the invention of the cotton gin affect the Southern economy?
- What was the impact of slavery on the United States?
- What were the lives of enslaved people like?
- How did enslaved African Americans resist their enslavement?

TAKE NOTES

Literacy Skills: Compare and Contrast

Use the graphic organizer in your Active Journal to take notes as you read the lesson.

PRACTICE VOCABULARY

Use the vocabulary activity in your Active Journal to practice the vocabulary words.

Vocabulary

boom
cultivate
“cottonocracy”

slave code
extended
family

Academic Vocabulary

cash crop
discrimination

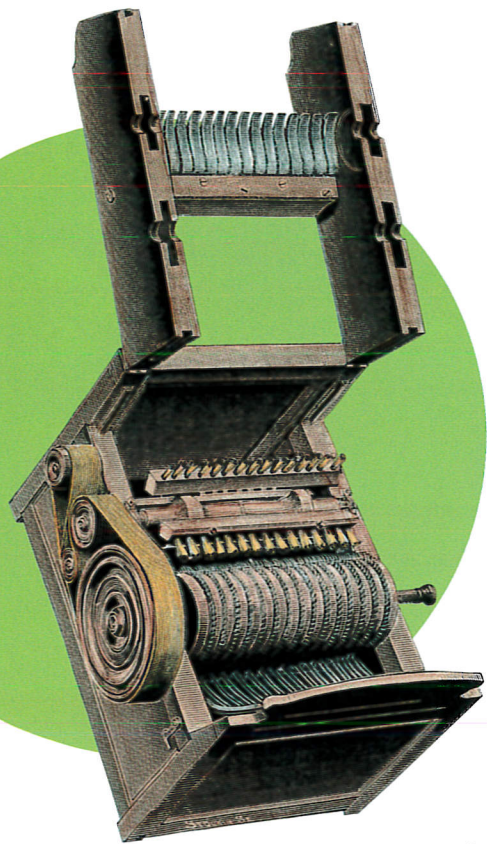
During the 1800s, cotton continued to grow in importance in the South. It was so profitable that southerners did not even feel a need to invest in factories. Even though southerners grew other crops, cotton remained the region’s leading export. Cotton plantations—and the slave system on which they depended—shaped the way of life in the South.

The South’s Cotton Kingdom

The Industrial Revolution greatly increased the demand for southern cotton. Textile mills in the North and in Britain needed more and more cotton to make cloth. At first, southern planters could not meet the demand. They could grow plenty of cotton, because the South’s soil and climate were ideal. However, removing the seeds from the cotton by hand was a slow process. Planters needed a better way to clean cotton.

Eli Whitney Invents the Cotton Gin

Eli Whitney, a young teacher from Connecticut, traveled to Georgia in 1793. He planned to be a tutor on a plantation.



Analyze Images Workers fed cotton bolls through the gin's teeth and barbed roller to separate out the seeds and straighten the fibers. Using the gin, workers could produce much more cotton in a day. **Predict Consequences** How would this invention affect the demand for slaves?

INTERACTIVE
The Cotton Gin

At that time, there were few public schools in the South. Whitney was also a tinkerer. He loved to fix things. When he learned of the planters' problem, he decided to build a machine to clean cotton.

In only ten days, Whitney came up with a model. His cotton engine, or gin, had two rollers with thin wire teeth. When cotton was swept between the rollers, the teeth separated the seeds from the fibers.

This machine led to a dramatic expansion of plantation agriculture across the South. A single worker using a cotton gin could do the work of 50 people cleaning cotton by hand. Planters could now grow cotton at a huge profit. As a result, this new technology brought economic growth.

The Cotton Kingdom and Slavery The cotton gin led to a **boom**, or swift growth, in cotton production. In 1792, planters grew only 6,000 bales of cotton a year. By 1850, they were producing more than 2 million bales.

In the southern states along the Atlantic coast, there was not enough farmland to meet demand. Cotton farmers needed new land to **cultivate**, or prepare for planting.

After the War of 1812, cotton planters began to move west. They took enslaved African Americans with them. The huge demand for cotton, the efficiency offered by cotton gins, and southern planters' reliance on slave labor led to the growth of large plantations, each with many enslaved workers.

By the 1850s, cotton plantations extended in a belt from South Carolina to Texas. This area of the South became known as the Cotton Kingdom. Physical aspects of the environment in this part of the South, including rich soils, warm temperatures, and abundant rainfall, encouraged an economy focused on cotton farming.

Tragically, as the Cotton Kingdom spread, so did slavery. Even though cotton could now be cleaned by machine, it still had to be planted and picked by hand. The result was a cruel cycle in which slave labor brought profits to planters, who then used the profits to buy more land and more enslaved workers.

How Did the North and West Promote Slavery?

Slavery was a southern institution. However, northern and western factories, businesses, and banks indirectly promoted the enslavement of people through their commercial links with the South. Slave labor produced the cotton and other raw materials that fed the textile factories and other industries in the North and West. Slavery enabled those industries to thrive. When families in the North and West bought goods produced by enslaved workers, they too helped support the South's slave-based economy.

READING CHECK Identify Cause and Effect How did the invention of the cotton gin lead to an increase in slavery in the South?

Reliance on Plantation Agriculture

Cotton was the South's most profitable **cash crop**. However, the best soils and climate for growing cotton could be found mostly in a belt stretching across inland South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. In other areas of the South, rice, sugar cane, and tobacco were major crops. In addition, southerners raised much of the nation's livestock. Characteristics of the physical environment in different regions of the South influenced what farmers in those regions produced.

Rice was an important crop along the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia. Sugar cane was important in Louisiana and Texas. Growing rice and sugar cane required expensive irrigation and drainage systems and a warm, moist climate, all found mainly along the coasts.

Cane growers also needed costly machinery to grind their harvest. Small-scale farmers could not afford such expensive equipment, however. As a result, rice and sugar farmers relied on the plantation system, just as cotton farmers did.

Tobacco had been an export of the South since 1619, and it continued to be planted in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. However, in the early 1800s, the large tobacco plantations of colonial days had given way to small tobacco farms. On these farms, a few field hands tended five or six acres of tobacco.

In addition to the major cash crops of cotton, rice, sugar, and tobacco, the South also led the nation in livestock production. Southern livestock owners profited from hogs, oxen, horses, mules, and beef cattle, raised on land unsuitable for crops.

Academic Vocabulary

cash crop • *n.*, a crop sold for money at market

Analyze Images African Americans enslaved on a plantation load rice onto a barge for transport on the Savannah River. **Infer** How long do you think it took to fill a barge with rice?



Livestock farming thrived in the woods of North Carolina and the hills of Georgia, western Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Kentucky developed a rural economy that included the breeding of horses.

Limited Southern Industry Because the South relied on agriculture, most of the industry in the South remained small and existed only to meet the needs of an agrarian society. This contrasted with the North, with its increasingly urban society and large and diverse industries. Southern factories made agricultural tools such as cotton gins, planters, and plows. They also made goods such as ironware, hoes, and jute or hemp cloth, which was used to make bags for holding bales of cotton. Cheap cotton cloth was made for use in enslaved workers' clothing. Some southerners wanted to encourage the growth of industry in the South. William Gregg, for example, modeled his cotton mill in South Carolina on the mills in Lowell, Massachusetts. Gregg built houses and gardens for his paid workers and schools for their children.

The South also developed a few other successful industries. In Richmond, Virginia, for example, the Tredegar Iron Works turned out railroad equipment, machinery, tools, and cannons. Flour milling was another important southern industry.

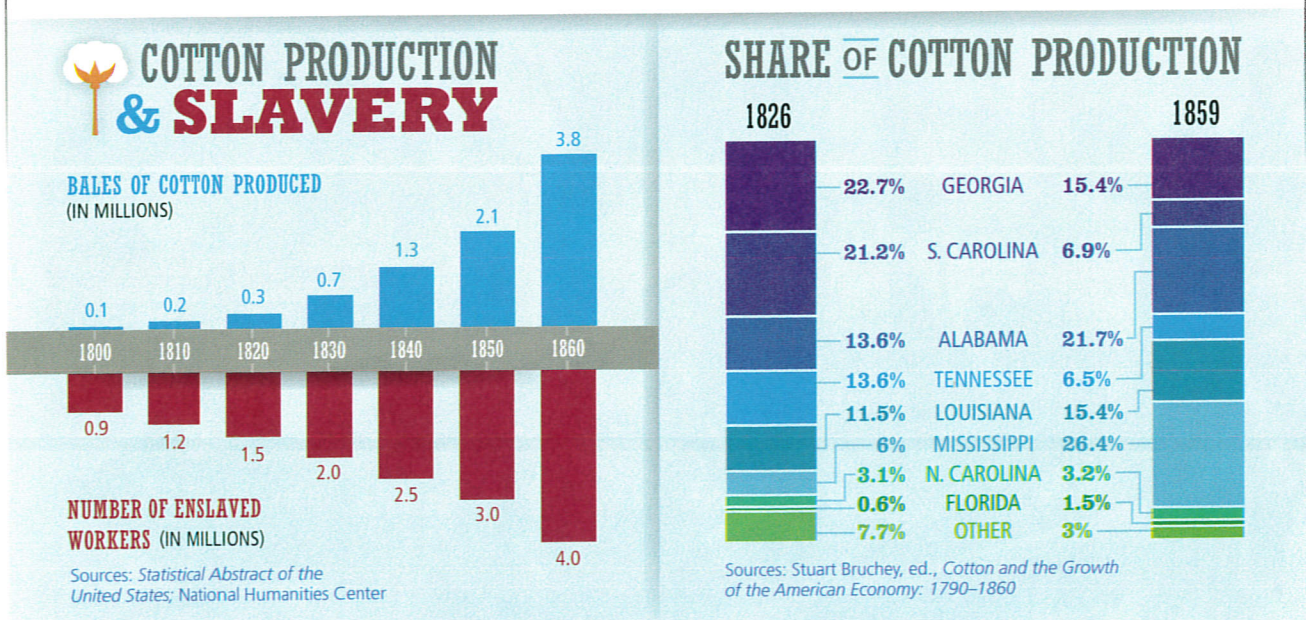
Even so, the South lagged behind the North in manufacturing. This difference had several causes. Rich planters invested their money in land and in purchasing enslaved African Americans rather than in factories.

Slavery also reduced the need for southern industry. In the North, most people had enough money to buy factory goods. In the South, however, millions of enslaved African Americans could not buy anything. As a result, the demand for manufactured goods in the South was not as great as it was in the North.

Analyze Data Although figures varied from state to state, all southern states had agricultural economies.

Use Visual Information Why did the number of slaves in South Carolina increase even though its share of cotton production declined?

SOUTHERN DEPENDENCE ON AGRICULTURE



Southern Cities Although the South was mainly rural, there were some cities. The major ones were New Orleans, Louisiana; Charleston, South Carolina; and Richmond, Virginia. These cities had the same problems as northern cities, including poor housing and poor sanitation.

Fewer than 8 percent of white southerners lived in towns of more than 4,000 people. Many free African Americans lived in towns and cities.

Economically Dependent The South's lack of industry had a number of effects on the region. Because there were few industrial jobs, people in the South had few ways to escape the poverty of life on a small farm, whereas northern farmers could move to cities and take factory jobs. With little industry of its own, the South also came to depend more and more on the North and on Europe. Southern planters often borrowed money from northern banks. They also purchased much of their furniture, farm tools, and machines from northern or European factories.

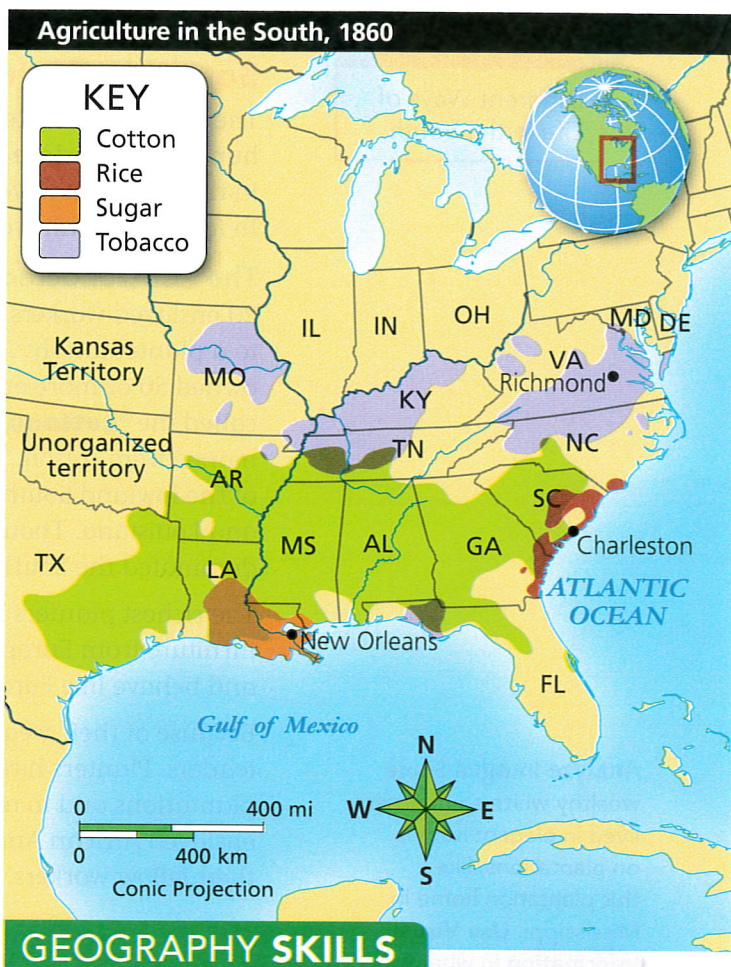
Many southerners resented this situation. One described a burial to show how the South depended on the North for many goods:

Primary Source

"The grave was dug through solid marble, but the marble headstone came from Vermont. It was in a pine wilderness but the pine coffin came from Cincinnati. An iron mountain overshadowed it but the coffin nails and the screws and the shovel came from Pittsburgh. . . . A hickory grove grew nearby, but the pick and shovel handles came from New York. . . . That country, so rich in underdeveloped resources, furnished nothing for the funeral except the corpse and the hole in the ground."

—Henry Grady, Speech to the Bay Street Club, Boston, 1889

READING CHECK **Draw Conclusions** Why was the South dependent on the North and Europe for non-agricultural goods?



GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

This map shows the major crops grown in various regions of the South in 1860. **Region** What advantages did the South have in terms of the physical environment over the North? **Use Visual Information** Which crop was grown in the most limited geographic area?

Quest CONNECTIONS

What does this reliance on other places for manufactured goods tell you about the South's stance on slavery?



INTERACTIVE

Different Ways of
Life in the South

What Were the Characteristics of White Southern Society?

The Old South is often pictured as a land of vast plantations worked by hundreds of enslaved African Americans. Such grand estates did exist in the South. However, most white southerners were not rich planters. In fact, most whites owned no enslaved African Americans at all.

The "Cottonocracy" A planter was someone who owned at least 20 enslaved workers. In 1860, only one white southerner in 30 belonged to a planter family. An even smaller number—less than 1 percent—owned 50 or more enslaved workers. These wealthy families were called the "**cottonocracy**" because they made huge amounts of money from cotton. These rich planters lived mainly in the cotton belt of the lowland South and in coastal areas of South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana. Though few in number, their views and way of life dominated the South.

The richest planters built elegant homes and filled them with expensive furniture from Europe. They entertained lavishly. They tried to dress and behave like European nobility.

Because of their wealth and influence, many planters became political leaders. Planters hired white overseers to run day-to-day affairs on their plantations and to manage the work of enslaved people. Sometimes, enslaved African Americans, called drivers, were allowed to oversee their fellow workers.

Analyze Images Some wealthy white southerners lived in elegant homes on plantations, like this plantation home in Mississippi. **Use Visual Information** In what ways does this home resemble the homes of European nobility?

Small Farmers About 75 percent of southern whites lived on small family farms. These "plain folk" owned the land they farmed. They might also own one or two enslaved African Americans. Unlike planters, plain folk worked with their enslaved workers in the fields. Small farmers could be found in most parts of the South, but their numbers were fewer in the cotton belt and in coastal regions of the South, where plantation agriculture dominated.


Among these farm families, helping one another was an important duty. "People who lived miles apart counted themselves as neighbors," wrote a farmer in Mississippi. "And in case of sorrow or sickness, there was no limit to the service neighbors provided."



Poor Whites Lower on the social ladder were poor whites. These whites did not own enslaved African Americans. Many did not own the land they farmed. Instead, they rented it, often paying the owner with part of their crop. Many barely made a living.

Poor whites often lived in the hilly, wooded areas of the upland South, north and west of the cotton belt. They planted crops such as corn, potatoes, and other vegetables. They also herded cattle and pigs. Poor whites had hard lives, but they enjoyed rights that were denied to all black people, enslaved or free.

Comparing Northern and Southern Whites Like northern whites, most southern whites were farmers. Most white farmers in both regions were small farmers. However, there were important differences in the white populations of the two regions. In the South, the wealthiest whites were planters who made their money from the work of enslaved African Americans. In the North, the wealthiest whites were capitalists who made their money from investing in industry. There were many white industrial workers and middle class people living in cities in the North. Relatively few southerners of any class lived in cities.

 **READING CHECK Summarize** Tell how the lives of white southerners differed.

What Was Life Like for African Americans in the South?

Both free and enslaved African Americans lived in the South. Their legal and political conditions were different. Although free under the law and with certain legal rights, free African Americans faced harsh **discrimination**. Enslaved African Americans had no rights at all.

Free African Americans Most free African Americans were descendants of enslaved people who were freed during and after the American Revolution. Others had bought their freedom. In 1860, more than 200,000 free blacks lived in the South. Most lived in Maryland and Delaware, where slavery was in decline. Others lived in cities such as New Orleans, Richmond, and Charleston.

Many free African Americans reached an impressive level of success. Working as farmers, laborers, and artisans, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, and cobblers, they contributed to and influenced southern life. Some ran their own businesses, such as inns and barbershops.



Analyze Images The lives of the white and the African American children in this image were vastly different. **Identify Supporting Details** Identify details in the image that support this statement.

Academic Vocabulary
discrimination • *n.*, a policy or practice that denies equal rights to certain groups of people

A few became large plantation owners, growing cotton and owning enslaved workers.

White slave owners did not like free African Americans living in the South. They feared that free African Americans set a dangerous example, encouraging enslaved African Americans to rebel. Also, slave owners justified slavery by claiming that African Americans could not take care of themselves. Free African Americans proved this idea wrong.

To discourage free African Americans, southern states passed laws that limited their freedom and economic opportunities. Free African Americans were not allowed to vote or travel. In some southern states, they had to move out of the state or risk the chance of being kidnapped and enslaved.

Despite these limits, free African Americans were able to make a life for themselves and make valuable contributions to southern life. For example, Norbert Rillieux (RIHL yoo) invented a machine that revolutionized the way sugar was refined. Another inventor, Henry Blair, patented a seed planter.

Enslaved African Americans By 1860, enslaved African Americans made up one third of the South's population. Most worked as field hands on cotton plantations. Both men and women cleared new land and planted and harvested crops. Children helped by pulling weeds, collecting wood, and carrying water to the field hands. By the time they were teenagers, they worked between 12 and 14 hours a day. Daily labor in the fields bound enslaved workers into a community of people who tried to help and protect one another.

Analyze Images In 1849, Henry Brown thought of an ingenious way to escape slavery: He had himself mailed from Virginia to Philadelphia. **Infer** What do you think happened to the people in Virginia who helped Brown escape?



On large plantations, some enslaved African Americans had better positions. They might work as household servants or as skilled artisans, such as carpenters and blacksmiths. Such jobs might entitle workers to better food or clothing than field hands.

A few enslaved people worked in cities. Their earnings, however, belonged to their owners. Unlike free African Americans, enslaved African Americans could not easily start their own businesses.

Another major difference between the social circumstances of free and enslaved African Americans was that enslaved African American families could be broken up by their owners, with family members sold separately and to different owners. While they faced discrimination, free African American families were not forced to separate.



Analyze Images A child, a group of women and a man, probably enslaved African Americans, sit on the steps of the Florida Club in St. Augustine, Florida, in the mid-1800s.

Draw Conclusions What role did the white woman standing behind them play in their lives?

READING CHECK **Compare and Contrast** How was life in the South similar and different for free and enslaved African Americans?

Slavery in the South

The life of enslaved African Americans was determined by strict laws and the practices of individual slave owners. Conditions varied from plantation to plantation. Some owners made sure their enslaved workers had clean cabins, decent food, and warm clothes. Other planters spent as little as possible on their enslaved workers.

Slave Codes Southern states passed laws known as **slave codes** to keep enslaved African Americans from either running away or rebelling. Under the codes, enslaved African Americans were forbidden to gather in groups of more than three.

They could not leave their owner's land without a written pass from their owner. They were not allowed to own guns.

Slave codes also made it a crime for enslaved African Americans to learn how to read and write. Owners hoped that this law would make it hard for African Americans to escape slavery. They reasoned that uneducated enslaved African Americans who escaped their owners would not be able to use maps or read train schedules. They would not be able to find their way north.

Some laws were meant to protect enslaved African Americans, but only from the worst forms of abuse. However, enslaved African Americans did not have the right to testify in court. As a result, they were not able to bring charges against owners who abused them.

INTERACTIVE
Lives of Free and Enslaved African Americans

Enslaved African Americans had only one real protection against mistreatment. Owners looked on their enslaved workers as valuable property. Most slave owners wanted to keep this human property healthy and productive. However, they would not hesitate to punish enslaved African Americans to keep them in line.

Frances Kemble, a British actress married to a southern slave owner, kept a journal about plantation life. She wrote about who had the right to whip an enslaved person:

Primary Source

“The common drivers are limited in their powers of chastisement, not being allowed to administer more than a certain number of lashes to their fellow slaves. Head man Frank, as he is called, has alone the privilege of exceeding this limit; and the overseer’s latitude of infliction is only curtailed by the necessity of avoiding injury to life or limb. The master’s irresponsible power has no such bound.”

—Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838–1839*

Analyze Images Music

Music served as a source of solace and hope for enslaved African Americans. The spiritual is closely associated with the culture of slavery.

Infer Why did people find hope in music?

Hard Work Even the kindest owners insisted that their enslaved workers work long, hard days. Enslaved African Americans worked from “can see to can’t see,” or from dawn to dusk, up to 16 hours a day.



Family Life It was hard for enslaved African Americans to keep their families together. Southern laws did not recognize slave marriages or slave families. As a result, owners could sell a husband and wife to different buyers. Children were often taken from their parents and sold.

On large plantations, many enslaved families did manage to stay together. For those African Americans, the family was a source of strength, pride, and love. Grandparents, parents, children, aunts, uncles, and cousins formed a close-knit group. This idea of an **extended family** had its roots in Africa.

Enslaved African Americans preserved other traditions as well. Parents taught their children traditional African stories and songs. They used folk tales to pass on African history and moral beliefs.

Religion Offers Hope By the 1800s, many enslaved African Americans were devout Christians. Planters often allowed white ministers to preach to their slaves. African Americans also had their own preachers and beliefs.

Religion helped African Americans cope with the harshness of slave life. Bible stories about how the ancient Israelites had escaped from slavery to freedom inspired a new type of religious song called a spiritual. Yet, enslaved African Americans had to be cautious even in their religious practice. While they sang of freedom in spirituals, the words of the spirituals suggested that this freedom would come after death, so as not to alarm slave owners.

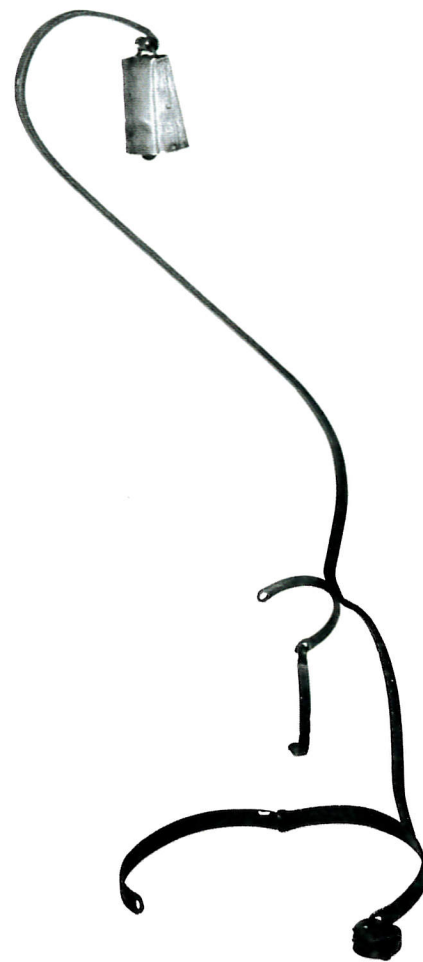
 **READING CHECK** **Identify Supporting Details** Why was it difficult for enslaved African Americans to keep their families together?

How Did Enslaved African Americans Resist Their Enslavement?

Enslaved African Americans struck back against the system that denied them both freedom and wages. Some slowed the pace of their work, broke tools, destroyed crops, or pretended they were ill. Some passively resisted by learning to read and write. Others took much bolder action.

Many enslaved African Americans tried to escape to the North. Because the journey was long and dangerous, very few made it to freedom. Every county had slave patrols and sheriffs ready to question an unknown black person.

Because southern laws offered no means to resist slavery, a few African Americans turned to violence. Gabriel Prosser, an enslaved African American, organized an uprising in Richmond, Virginia, but it failed. Denmark Vesey, a free African American, planned a revolt in 1822. Vesey was betrayed before the revolt began. Both Prosser and Vesey were executed, along with dozens of their followers.



Analyze Images Enslaved people who tried to escape but were recaptured were forced to wear devices like this, which locked around their necks. **Use Visual Information** How would this device have affected a person wearing it?



Analyze Images In 1831, Nat Turner led other enslaved African Americans on a violent campaign against slave owners. In this image, Turner is planning an attack. **Predict Consequences** How would Turner's rebellion affect the lives of enslaved African Americans who did not rebel?

the African Americans, free or enslaved. Southern states reacted to the revolt by further limiting African Americans' rights. At first, the Virginia legislature seriously debated ending slavery in the state, but decided against it. Virginia then, like other southern states, increased its restrictions on African Americans.

Overall, organized slave revolts were rare. Because southern whites were well armed and kept careful track of African Americans, an uprising by African Americans had almost no chance of success.

READING CHECK **Draw Conclusions** What do the actions of leaders of slave revolts reveal about the conditions under which enslaved Africans were forced to live?

Other armed slave revolts took a toll on both blacks and whites. The Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739 resulted in the deaths of some 30 enslaved African American rebels and a similar number of white colonists.

In 1831, an African American named Nat Turner led a major revolt. An enslaved worker on a plantation in Southampton County, Virginia, Turner believed his mission was to take revenge on plantation owners.

Turner led his followers through Virginia, killing more than 57 whites. For nearly two months terrified whites hunted the countryside looking for Turner. They killed many innocent African Americans before catching and hanging him.

Nat Turner's revolt increased southern fears of an uprising of enslaved African Americans.


Whites now became even more suspicious of

Lesson Check

Practice Vocabulary

1. How did the **boom** in cotton production lead to the rise of the "cottonocracy"?
2. How did the physical characteristics of the environment affect a planter's decision about what crops to **cultivate**?

Critical Thinking and Writing

3. **Recognize Multiple Causes** What are three reasons that cotton became "king" in the South?
4. **Understand Effects** Why were there few factories in the South?
5. **Explain an Argument** Did their resistance to enslavement generally help or hurt enslaved African Americans? Explain.
6. **Writing Workshop: Organize Sequence of Events** Plan the events that you will describe in your narrative essay. In your  Active Journal, write out those events in the order in which they will happen.