

Cotton and Slavery in America from the 1770s through the 1840s: The Relationship

8th Grade American History
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The following essay question is based on the accompanying documents, 1-7. Analyze the documents and answer the questions for each document. Using the documents and your knowledge of American History write a short essay on the prompt provided below.

Directions:

- Analyze the documents
- Answer the questions for each document
- Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, supporting paragraphs and a conclusion.
- Use evidence from the documents and your knowledge of American History to answer the essay question

Essay Question:

Using the provided documents and your knowledge of American History, explain how the development of the American cotton industry directly or indirectly influenced slavery in the United States between the late 1770s and early 1800s.

DOCUMENT 1

REPORT OF THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS for TRADE and PLANTATIONS ON THE PETITION OF THE Honourable Thomas Walpole, Benjamin Franklin, John Sargent, and Samuel Wharton, Esquires, and their Associates; FOR A Grant of Lands on the River Ohio, in North America; for the purpose of Erecting a new Government. WITH OBSERVATIONS and REMARKS

My Lords,

Pursuant to your lordships order of the 25th May 1770, we have taken into our consideration the humble memorial of the honourable Thomas Walpole, Benjamin Franklin, John Sargent, and Samuel Wharton, Esquires, in behalf of themselves and their associates, setting forth (among other things) "That they presented...

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SOUTHERN STATES.

The Third, and much the largest GRAND DIVISION of the UNITED STATES comprehends

MARYLAND,
VIRGINIA,
KENTUCKY,
NORTH CAROLINA

TERRITORY SOUTH OF OHIO,
SOUTH CAROLINA, and
GEORGIA.

...From the sea coast, sixty, eighty, and some parts 100 miles back towards the mountain, the country, generally speaking, is nearly a dead level, and a very large proportion of it is covered, in its natural state, with pitch pines. In the neighborhood of stagnant waters, which abound in this level country, the inhabitants are sickly. In the back, hilly, and mountainous country, they are healthy as in any part of America.

This district of the Union contains upwards of one million nine hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom 648,439 are slaves, which is *thirteen fourteenths* of the whole number of slaves in the United States. The influence of slavery has produced a very distinguishing feature in the general character of the inhabitants, which, though now discernible to their disadvantage, has been softened and meliorated by the benign effects of the revolution, and the progress of liberty and humanity.

The following may be considered as the principal productions of this division; tobacco, rice, indigo, wheat, corn, cotton, tar, pitch, turpentine, and lumber.

1772 Report of the Lords Commissioners

1. How is this southern land described and what are the primary agricultural industries?

2. How is the slave population described?

3. What is the significance of the slave population in the south during the 1770s?

Document 2: Personal Letter

SUMMARY

One of thirteen letters by **Barthelemi Tardiveau** to St. John de Crevecoeur. 25 August 1789 letter. **Tardiveau** discusses his trip to Cumberland County, and of the cotton growing industry there. He describes his involvement in introducing cotton processing machinery into Kentucky.

Letter from Barthelemi Tardiveau to St. John de Crevecour

August 25, 1789

Sir and good friend

My last letter informed you of my approaching departure for the Cumberland country; and here I am back again safe and sound, to the great astonishment of my brother and of my friends who had become convinced that we had been killed because my fellow-traveler and I returned three weeks later than we had promised, and because some travelers who left Nashville after we did had expressed to the people here their astonishment that we hadn't been back for some time....

I found agriculture much more actively pursued in this district than when I was there in 1785. The settlers are no longer as much given to hunting, but to tilling the soil; which is as much due to the fact that game has disappeared...

In Cumberland they are growing a great deal of cotton which does much better there than in Kentucky, and it is of a very fine quality. As soon as I find a suitable opportunity, I will forward a few pounds of it to you, which I'll ask you to send on to one of your friends at Rouen, and to find out if it would be suitable for use in the factories of that city, and what price they would pay for it there? If it were possible to open up this branch of trade with the Mississippi, it could be very profitable, for as there is no product of the soil which pays so well, the farmers of Cumberland would rather devote themselves to the growing of this plant than to any other

It is brought to Kentucky overland on horseback and is used to pay for all the salt that this section supplies to Cumberland, and for a small amount of dry goods. At present that's the sole outlet for this cotton, except what is manufactured on the spot into coarse cloth, but which ought to seem good enough in a new settlement, which is not wealthy and is lacking in all sorts of resources: but here as elsewhere they have the mania for buying imported cloth. If it were possible to open up a great market for this cotton, several million pounds at a quarter of a piastre might be obtained

While I was in Cumberland I conceived the idea that it would be very useful to introduce into Kentucky machines for spinning and carding cotton, with several looms for manufacturing different sorts of cloth; and I intended to do something about this plan in case none of those that I've made for getting out of this place succeeded. I thought that no one had considered this matter before myself; but upon my return here I found that others had laid the foundation of a society for the carrying-out of this plan, and I wholeheartedly joined with them...

Your servant and sincere friend,

B. Tardiveau

4. According to Tardiveau, why has cotton production become popular in Cumberland County and Kentucky?

5. At first Tardiveau expects to ship the raw cotton to Europe (Rouen) by way of the Mississippi River but then he has an alternative plan. What is that plan?

DOCUMENT 3

No. 127: BLACK INVENTORS

Excerpt:

Today, a look at black American inventors before the Civil War. The University of Houston's College of Engineering presents this series about the machines that make our civilization run, and the people whose ingenuity created them.

The slave population in the American colonies reached a maximum of a quarter-million in 1754. But it dropped off as we approached, and fought, the Revolutionary war. For a while, people thought slavery might die out entirely.

But technology intervened. [Eli Whitney](#) patented the cotton gin in 1793. Suddenly we could turn a profit on this terribly labor-intensive crop. From then until the Civil War the slave population increased to the astonishing level of 4,000,000.

The grand irony of all this is that the person who provided Whitney with the key idea for his gin was himself a slave, known to us only by the name Sam. Sam's father had solved the critical problem of removing seeds from cotton by developing a kind of comb to do the job. Whitney's cotton gin simply mechanized this comb.

The technologies of the Old South, of course, flowed from the people who were doing the jobs that had to be done. The story of Sam was repeated in different ways over and over. Slaves invented technology, but they couldn't patent it. In 1858, the United States Attorney General -- a man named Black -- ruled that, since slaves were property, their ideas were also the property of their masters. They had no rights to patents on their own.

[by John H. Lienhard](#)

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6. According to Lienhard, who invented the cotton gin?

7. What relationship does the author infer between the invention of the cotton gin and slavery?

DOCUMENT 4

Cotton promotes slavery

Slavery, which had up to now received little public attention, suddenly assumed enormous importance - "**like a fire bell in the night**," in Jefferson's words. In the early years of the republic, when the northern states were providing for immediate or gradual emancipation of the slaves, many leaders had supposed that slavery would die out. In 1786, Washington wrote that he devoutly wished some plan might be adopted "**by which slavery may be abolished by slow, sure, and imperceptible degrees**." Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and other leading southern statesmen made similar statements. As late as 1808, when the slave trade was abolished, there were many southerners who thought that slavery would soon end.

The expectation proved false, for during the next generation, the south became solidly united behind the institution of slavery as new economic factors made slavery far more profitable than it had been before 1790.

Chief among these was the rise of a great cotton-growing industry in the south, stimulated by the introduction of new types of cotton and by Eli Whitney's invention, the cotton gin, for separating the seeds from cotton. At the same time, the Industrial Revolution, which made textile manufacturing a large-scale operation, vastly increased the demand for raw cotton. And the opening of new lands in the west after 1812 greatly extended the area available for cotton cultivation. Cotton culture moved rapidly from the tidewater states through much of the lower south to the Mississippi River and eventually on to Texas.

Except for a migration into Texas beyond the bounds of the United States, the westward march of the agricultural frontier did not pass Missouri until after 1840.

Source: A Hypertext on American History from the colonial period until Modern Times. Department of Humanities Computing, University of Groningen, The Netherlands. <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/index.htm> (January 6, 2007)


8. According to the article, what was the primary reason slavery became more profitable?


9. What were the four principle reasons the cotton industry increased in the South?

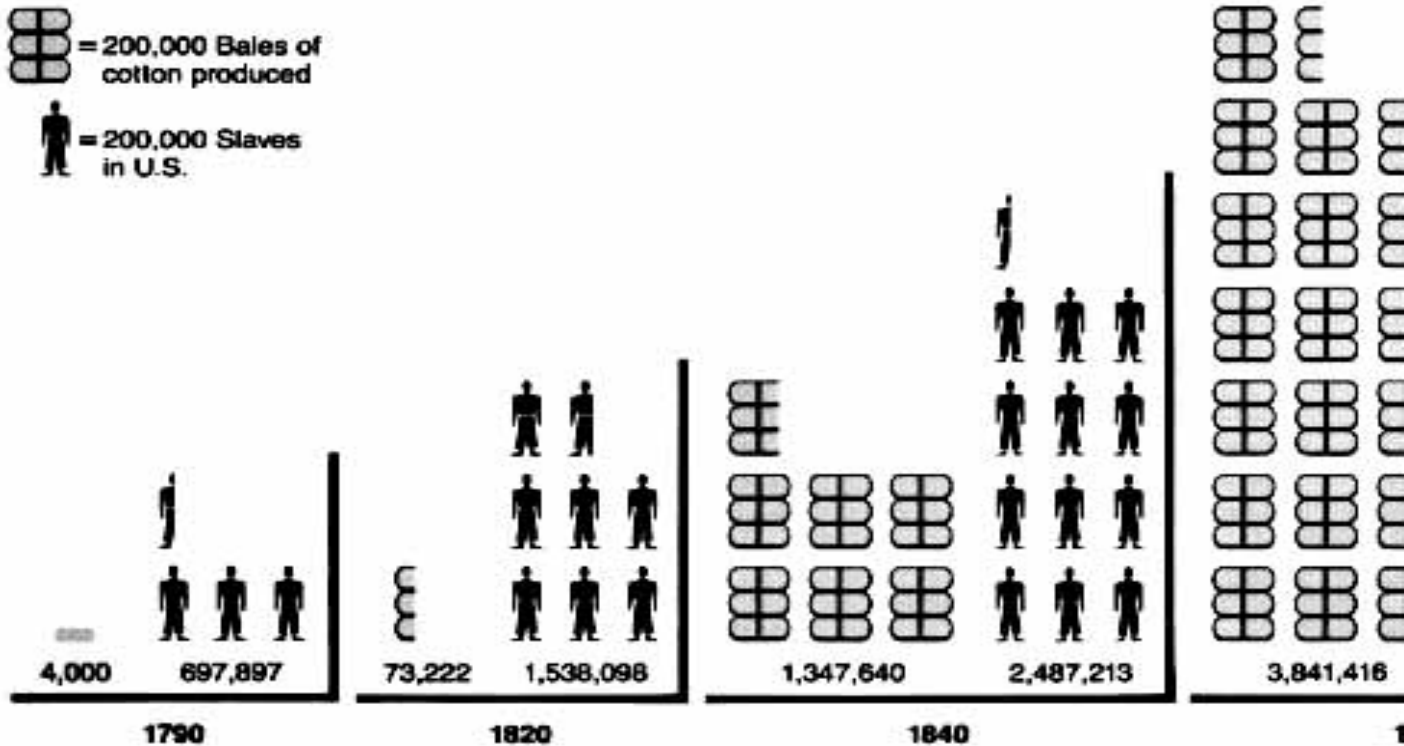
10. In what American geographical areas did cotton cultivation begin and then spread?

Document 5 (See map on next page)

Growth of Cotton production and the Slave Population, 1790-1840

 = 200,000 Bales of cotton produced

 = 200,000 Slaves in U.S.



Cotton and slavery rose together in the Old South.

DOCUMENT 7

14. In 1790, how many bales of cotton were produced and how many slaves were there in the United States?

15. By 1840, what was the overall change in cotton production and slave populations?

Now you are ready to write the Essay Question:

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