Cotton and Conflict

How sectionalism changed lives in Alabama, 1832 to 1861

SS24.US1.11c "Describe how Alabamians were impacted by growing sectionalism from 1832 to 1861, including the reliance on cotton and slave labor, the Second Creek War, and secession."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline causes tied to cotton and slavery, and circle effects on people in Alabama.

Land, Labor, and Secession

1. In the 1830s, cotton fields spread across Alabama's Black Belt, where fertile soil drew planters seeking profits. Enslaved people cleared land, planted cotton, and harvested it under coercion. Cotton sales tied many white Alabamians to markets beyond the state, while slavery made those profits possible. As northern opposition to slavery grew, many slaveholders feared that federal limits would threaten their property and political power. Enslaved Alabamians faced family separation, violence, and the denial of freedom throughout this expanding economy.

2. The spread of cotton also intensified pressure on Creek land. In 1832, a federal treaty divided Creek territory in Alabama into individual allotments, but fraud and unlawful land sales stripped many Creek families of their homes. In 1836, Creek resistance and attacks on settlers led to fighting known as the Second Creek War. Federal troops and Alabama militia fought Creek people; thousands were then forced west. Removal opened more land to white settlement and cotton planting, while Creek communities suffered deaths, displacement, and loss.

3. By 1860, disputes over slavery had split national politics. After Abraham Lincoln won the presidency without carrying a Southern state, Alabama's secession convention voted in January 1861 to leave the United States. Delegates defending secession pointed to threats they believed slavery faced. Not all white Alabamians agreed, and enslaved Alabamians could not vote on the decision. Secession brought the state toward war, threatening homes and livelihoods across Alabama. The vote showed how deeply the cotton economy and slavery shaped political choices.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did cotton growth affect slaveholders and enslaved Alabamians differently?

2. How did the 1832 treaty and later land sales affect Creek families?

3. How did the Second Creek War change both Creek lives and the use of Alabama land?

4. How did conflict over slavery shape Alabama's 1861 decision, and who could not vote on it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label tracing how cotton growth, Creek removal, and secession were connected. Contrast what these events meant for at least two groups in Alabama.

ANSWER KEY

Cotton and Conflict

GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.11c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline causes tied to cotton and slavery, and circle effects on people in Alabama. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did cotton growth affect slaveholders and enslaved Alabamians differently?	**Slaveholders gained profits, while enslaved Alabamians were forced to work and faced violence, family separation, and the denial of freedom.**
2	How did the 1832 treaty and later land sales affect Creek families?	**The treaty divided Creek land into allotments, but fraud and unlawful sales stripped many Creek families of their homes.**
3	How did the Second Creek War change both Creek lives and the use of Alabama land?	**Thousands of Creek people were forced west, and removal opened more land to white settlement and cotton planting.**
4	How did conflict over slavery shape Alabama's 1861 decision, and who could not vote on it?	**Delegates who supported secession feared threats to slavery and voted to leave the United States. Enslaved Alabamians could not vote.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Alabama planters expanded cotton production by forcing enslaved people to work, so protecting slavery became a political priority. The dispossession and removal of Creek communities opened more land to cotton planting but cost Creek families their homes. As national arguments over slavery sharpened, Alabama's leaders voted for secession in 1861. Planters sought to preserve their profits and power, while enslaved and Creek Alabamians faced coercion and displacement.

Accept responses that accurately connect cotton and slave labor to political conflict, Creek removal to expanding settlement, and secession to the defense of slavery. Students may describe different impacts on planters, enslaved people, and Creek communities.