

Cotton Changes Everything

Analyze how new technology reshaped cotton production and enslaved labor.

SS.8.A.4.10 "Analyze the impact of technological advancements on the agricultural economy and slave labor."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the four technologies named in the passage. Circle each phrase that tells how a technology changed cotton farming, selling, or profits, then number in order each complete sentence that explains an effect on enslaved people.

Technology, Cotton, and Forced Labor

- ① In 1793, Eli Whitney's cotton gin quickly separated seeds from short-staple cotton fiber. Before the gin, cleaning cotton by hand took many hours. The gin made short-staple cotton profitable across much of the South, where it could grow in many inland areas. Planters planted more cotton because mills wanted fiber. As cotton acreage and output grew, planters demanded more enslaved workers to plant, hoe, and pick the larger crop. The gin did not create slavery, but it strengthened the plantation economy that depended on forced labor.
- ② During the early nineteenth century, textile machinery in British and northern U.S. mills spun and wove cotton into cloth faster than hand workers could. Factory owners needed steady, large supplies of raw cotton. Their demand raised cotton's value and encouraged southern planters to enlarge plantations. Enslaved people did not usually operate those distant textile machines. Instead, greater mill demand increased the pressure on enslaved laborers who produced the raw cotton, especially during planting and picking seasons.
- ③ Steamboats carried cotton on rivers more quickly and cheaply than many older methods. Railroads linked inland farms, towns, and ports, widening access to buyers. These transportation advances helped cotton growers sell larger crops in distant markets. Profits from cotton gave many planters an incentive to expand acreage. On plantations, expansion meant that enslaved people were forced to produce more cotton. New technology increased the scale and profit of cotton agriculture, while slavery supplied the labor that planters used to meet growing demand.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the cotton gin change the agricultural economy, and how did that change affect enslaved workers?

2 Why did textile machinery increase pressure on enslaved laborers even though they did not usually operate the machines?

3 What advantage does the passage assign to steamboats? What different role does it assign to railroads?

4 How did technology and slavery work together to help planters meet growing demand for cotton?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose the cotton gin, textile machinery, steamboats, or railroads. In 3 or 4 sentences, write a cause-and-effect explanation that connects the technology to the cotton economy and to slave labor. Use at least two details from the passage.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the four technologies named in the passage. Circle each phrase that tells how a technology changed cotton farming, selling, or profits, then number in order each complete sentence that explains an effect on enslaved people. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the cotton gin change the agricultural economy, and how did that change affect enslaved workers?	The gin made short-staple cotton profitable, so planters grew more cotton. They demanded more enslaved workers to plant, hoe, and pick the larger crop.
2	Why did textile machinery increase pressure on enslaved laborers even though they did not usually operate the machines?	The machines increased mills' need for raw cotton. That demand raised cotton's value and increased pressure on enslaved laborers to produce cotton.
3	What advantage does the passage assign to steamboats? What different role does it assign to railroads?	Steamboats carried cotton on rivers more quickly and cheaply than many older methods. Railroads linked inland farms, towns, and ports, widening access to buyers.
4	How did technology and slavery work together to help planters meet growing demand for cotton?	Technology increased the scale and profit of cotton agriculture and helped growers reach markets. Planters used enslaved labor to produce the larger cotton crops that growing demand required.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Textile machinery made cloth faster, so mills needed large supplies of raw cotton. This demand raised cotton's value and encouraged planters to enlarge plantations. Although enslaved people did not run the distant machines, they faced greater pressure to grow and pick the cotton mills required.

Accept equivalent cause-and-effect explanations supported by the passage. Student responses should connect a named technology to a change in the cotton economy and a stated effect on enslaved labor.