Sugar and Stories

How plantations shaped Jamaica's economy and culture

6.C.3.6.D "Explain the effects of plantation agriculture and the importation of enslaved labor on the economic development and cultural heritage of regions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two effects of sugar plantations and enslaved labor on Jamaica's economy. Circle two effects on its cultural heritage so you can see how this history changed both work and daily life.

What Sugar Left Behind

1. In the 1700s, sugar plantations spread across Jamaica, a Caribbean island under British rule. Plantation owners cleared large areas for cane fields and built mills to crush the cane. They forced enslaved Africans, brought across the Atlantic, to plant, cut, and process the crop. Sugar was shipped to Britain and other markets, where buyers paid for it. The sales brought wealth to plantation owners and merchants. They also tied Jamaica's economy closely to one export crop and to trade across the Atlantic.

2. That wealth did not reach everyone. Enslaved workers received no wages for their labor and lived under violence and strict control. Owners used profits to buy more land and equipment, while ports and roads grew to move sugar. This made shipping easier, but it also meant that much of the island's work and land served overseas buyers. After Britain ended slavery in its colonies in the 1830s, formerly enslaved people still faced unequal access to land and well-paid work. The plantation economy left lasting gaps in wealth.

3. People brought from different parts of Africa did not leave their knowledge behind. In Jamaica, enslaved people and their descendants kept and reshaped food traditions, music, and ways of speaking, even as owners tried to control their lives. Okra, a plant with African origins, became an ingredient in local dishes. African speech patterns and English helped shape Jamaican Creole, a language spoken on the island. These traditions mixed with other influences over time. Jamaica's cultural heritage reflects both people's creativity and the harsh history of forced labor.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did sugar plantations and enslaved labor bring wealth to plantation owners and merchants?

2. How did plantation profits change Jamaica's land and transportation, and whom did these changes mainly serve?

3. Why did ending slavery not erase the plantation economy's unequal effects?

4. How did the arrival of enslaved Africans shape Jamaica's cultural heritage? Explain two examples from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a museum display with a sack of Jamaican sugar and a bowl of okra stew. Write a 4- to 5-sentence label connecting both objects to plantation history. Explain who gained wealth, who faced economic harm, and how people shaped a cultural tradition.

ANSWER KEY

Sugar and Stories

GRADE 6 · 6.C.3.6.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two effects of sugar plantations and enslaved labor on Jamaica's economy. Circle two effects on its cultural heritage so you can see how this history changed both work and daily life. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did sugar plantations and enslaved labor bring wealth to plantation owners and merchants?	**Enslaved people grew and processed sugar without wages, and owners and merchants earned money by selling it overseas.**
2	How did plantation profits change Jamaica's land and transportation, and whom did these changes mainly serve?	**Owners bought more land and equipment, while ports and roads grew to move sugar. These changes mainly served plantation owners and overseas buyers.**
3	Why did ending slavery not erase the plantation economy's unequal effects?	**Formerly enslaved people still faced unequal access to land and well-paid work, leaving lasting gaps in wealth.**
4	How did the arrival of enslaved Africans shape Jamaica's cultural heritage? Explain two examples from the passage.	**Okra, a plant with African origins, became part of local dishes. African speech patterns helped shape Jamaican Creole alongside English.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This sugar sack represents a crop grown and processed by enslaved people in Jamaica. Plantation owners and merchants gained wealth by selling sugar overseas. Enslaved workers received no wages, and the plantation economy left lasting gaps in wealth. The okra stew represents a food tradition shaped by people brought from Africa. They kept and changed traditions even while living under forced labor.

Accept other accurate cause-and-effect explanations supported by the passage. For Part 3, look for a connection between both display objects and the economic and cultural effects of plantation agriculture and enslaved labor.