Cotton Across Regions

Trace how Southern cotton supported Northern textile mills.

8.C.10.1.C "Analyze the connection between cotton production in the South to the economic success of Northern textile industries."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show how Southern cotton reached Northern mills, circle two ways that cotton supply helped the mills earn money or grow, and draw arrows to connect the related details.

From Field to Mill

1. In the 1840s, a bale of cotton could begin in a Southern field and end as cloth in a Northern mill. On many Southern plantations, enslaved people planted, tended, and picked cotton under coercion, receiving no wages for their labor. The cotton gin separated seeds from picked cotton more quickly, but people still had to grow and harvest the crop. Planters packed the fiber into bales and sold it to merchants. Those merchants shipped bales by river and sea to ports that supplied Northern factories.

2. At a mill in Lowell, Massachusetts, workers fed raw cotton into machines that spun thread and wove cloth. Mill owners bought Southern cotton as a raw material, then sold finished cloth, hoping its price would cover cotton, wages, and other costs and leave a profit. Reliable deliveries helped owners keep machines running and workers employed. As cotton production expanded, Northern mills had access to large supplies of fiber. This helped the textile industry grow, although a mill's profits also depended on labor costs, machine costs, and the price buyers paid for cloth.

3. The connection reached beyond the mill. If shipments of Southern cotton stopped, Northern mill owners would have needed another source of fiber or had to slow production. Slower production could mean less cloth to sell and less income for the mill. Some merchants, shipowners, and banks in the North also earned money by moving or financing cotton. This economic chain linked two regions, but its benefits were not shared fairly. Enslaved people produced much of the cotton through forced labor, while others gained income from processing and selling it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did labor on Southern plantations supply the raw material used in Northern mills?

2. How did reliable deliveries of Southern cotton help Northern mills and their workers?

3. Why could a stop in Southern cotton shipments reduce a Northern mill's income?

4. How did the cotton trade create income for Northern businesses outside textile mills?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short note from a Northern mill worker to a cousin about what might happen if cotton shipments from the South were delayed for several weeks. Trace at least three linked effects and explain how forced labor was part of the supply chain.

ANSWER KEY

Cotton Across Regions

GRADE 8 · 8.C.10.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show how Southern cotton reached Northern mills, circle two ways that cotton supply helped the mills earn money or grow, and draw arrows to connect the related details. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did labor on Southern plantations supply the raw material used in Northern mills?	**Enslaved people planted, tended, and picked cotton, which was packed into bales and shipped to ports that supplied Northern mills.**
2	How did reliable deliveries of Southern cotton help Northern mills and their workers?	**Reliable deliveries helped mill owners keep machines running and workers employed so the mills could make cloth to sell.**
3	Why could a stop in Southern cotton shipments reduce a Northern mill's income?	**Without cotton, the mill would need another source of fiber or slow production, leaving it with less cloth to sell.**
4	How did the cotton trade create income for Northern businesses outside textile mills?	**Northern merchants, shipowners, and banks earned money by moving or financing cotton.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Cousin, our mill uses cotton that enslaved people are forced to grow and pick on Southern plantations. If shipments are delayed for weeks, the mill may run short of fiber. With less cotton to spin, we could make less cloth, so the owner might sell less and earn less income. My hours might also be cut if the machines sit idle. The wages I depend on are tied to a supply chain built on other people's forced labor.

Accept other passage-supported explanations that connect Southern cotton to Northern production or income. For the note, look for a plausible chain of at least three effects and an accurate account of enslaved labor.