

Profit and Forced Labor

Trace the economic causes behind plantations, the slave trade, and slavery's expansion.

8.12.B "explain reasons for the development of the plantation system, the transatlantic slave trade, and the spread of slavery; and"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each phrase that gives a reason for a development, then write 1 for plantations, 2 for the transatlantic slave trade, or 3 for the spread of slavery beside the underlined phrase.

A System Built for Profit

- ① During the 1600s and 1700s, European consumers bought increasing amounts of sugar, tobacco, rice, and other plantation crops. These crops brought high prices in Atlantic markets, so investors sought large profits. A plantation required broad tracts of land, expensive equipment, and many workers to plant, weed, harvest, and process a crop on schedule. Colonial governments granted land and protected trade with Europe. As planters competed to supply overseas buyers, they expanded production and looked for a labor system they could control.
- ② At first, some colonists used indentured servants, people who worked for a set number of years in exchange for passage or support. Planters increasingly turned to enslaved Africans, whose labor was forced for life and whose children could also be enslaved under colonial laws. The transatlantic slave trade carried kidnapped African people across the Atlantic under brutal conditions. European merchants, ship owners, and colonial planters earned money from this system. Racist ideas and laws developed and were strengthened to justify treating human beings as property.
- ③ The growth of plantations and the slave trade reinforced each other. More plantations created a larger demand for forced labor, while slave traders delivered captives whom planters exploited. Profits from crops and trading encouraged further investment in land, ships, and buying enslaved people. Slavery spread from Caribbean sugar islands to mainland colonies as planters pursued profitable crops and copied plantation methods. Enslaved people resisted in many ways, but violence, patrols, and laws helped enslavers maintain control. Economic goals therefore shaped a system built on human suffering and denied freedom.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What market conditions made plantation crops attractive to investors? Give two reasons from the passage.

2 Why did planters increasingly choose enslaved labor instead of indentured labor?

3 How did the possibility of profit help maintain the transatlantic slave trade?

4 Explain how plantation growth and the transatlantic slave trade reinforced each other.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine a coastal colony finds European buyers for indigo dye. Write exactly three sentences that explain how demand for indigo could lead to plantations, use of the transatlantic slave trade, and the spread of slavery to nearby colonies.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each phrase that gives a reason for a development, then write 1 for plantations, 2 for the transatlantic slave trade, or 3 for the spread of slavery beside the underlined phrase. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What market conditions made plantation crops attractive to investors? Give two reasons from the passage.	European consumers bought more plantation crops, and those crops brought high prices in Atlantic markets.
2	Why did planters increasingly choose enslaved labor instead of indentured labor?	Enslaved people were forced to work for life, and colonial laws allowed their children to be enslaved, giving planters a permanent labor force they could control.
3	How did the possibility of profit help maintain the transatlantic slave trade?	European merchants, ship owners, and colonial planters earned money from the system, so profit encouraged their participation.
4	Explain how plantation growth and the transatlantic slave trade reinforced each other.	More plantations increased demand for forced labor, and slave traders delivered kidnapped African people whom planters exploited. Crop and trade profits then encouraged more investment.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

European demand for blue dye could make indigo valuable, encouraging investors to buy coastal land and create large plantations. Because planting and processing indigo required many workers, planters could seek forced labor through the transatlantic slave trade. Profits could lead neighboring colonies to copy the system, spreading slavery.

Accept equivalent cause-and-effect explanations grounded in the passage, including demand, high prices, profits, land, labor needs, and legal control. For the open response, accept historically plausible three-sentence chains that connect all three required developments.