

Tobacco Changed Virginia

Read for ways agriculture shaped colonial Virginia.

VS.4.a “explaining the importance and influence of agriculture;”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four details that show how growing tobacco influenced Virginia's economy, transportation, or society, then number them 1–4.

A Crop With Big Effects

- ① When English settlers founded Jamestown in 1607, they first searched for gold and struggled to find food. John Rolfe began growing a type of tobacco that people in England wanted to buy. Tobacco became Virginia's main cash crop, a crop raised to sell. Farmers shipped it across the Atlantic and used the money or credit to buy supplies.
- ② Because tobacco could grow well in Virginia's soil and climate, many planters planted large fields of it instead of food crops. This choice connected Virginia closely to trade with England. Planters needed barrels, ships, stores, and workers. Rivers became important travel routes because boats could carry heavy tobacco from farms to ports more easily than wagons could carry it over rough roads.
- ③ Growing tobacco also changed Virginia society. Large farms required much labor. At first, many indentured servants worked for a set number of years. Later, plantation owners increasingly forced enslaved Africans and their descendants to do the work. This cruel system created wealth for some white planters while denying freedom to enslaved people. By the Revolutionary era, agriculture still shaped where people lived, worked, traded, and held power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did tobacco connect Virginia to England?

2 What is one way tobacco farming affected transportation in Virginia?

3 How did the workers on large tobacco farms change over time?

4 Name two ways agriculture still shaped Virginia by the Revolutionary era.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly three sentences explaining which effect of tobacco farming had the greatest influence on Virginia. State your choice, use two details from the passage, and explain why the effect mattered.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline four details that show how growing tobacco influenced Virginia's economy, transportation, or society, then number them 1–4. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did tobacco connect Virginia to England?	People in England bought Virginia tobacco, and Virginia farmers shipped it across the Atlantic and used the money or credit to buy supplies.
2	What is one way tobacco farming affected transportation in Virginia?	Rivers became important routes because boats could carry heavy tobacco from farms to ports more easily than wagons could use rough roads.
3	How did the workers on large tobacco farms change over time?	At first, many indentured servants worked on farms for a set number of years. Later, plantation owners increasingly forced enslaved Africans and their descendants to work.
4	Name two ways agriculture still shaped Virginia by the Revolutionary era.	Answers include where people lived, worked, traded, and held power. Any two are correct.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I think tobacco's greatest influence was its effect on Virginia society. Large farms needed many workers, and plantation owners increasingly forced enslaved Africans and their descendants to labor. This system gave some white planters wealth and power while taking freedom from enslaved people.

Accept a defensible choice supported by two accurate passage details and an explanation of why the effect mattered. Students may focus on trade, transportation, labor, or social power.