

The South

Section 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. The invention of the cotton gin revived the economy of the South.
2. The cotton gin created a cotton boom in which farmers grew little else.
3. Some people encouraged southerners to focus on other crops and industries.

Key Terms and People

cotton gin machine that separates cotton from its seeds

planters large-scale farmers who owned more than 20 slaves

cotton belt nickname for the region that grew most of the country's cotton crop

factors crop brokers who arranged transportation of goods aboard trading ships

Tredegar Iron Works in its day, the only large southern factory that made iron products

Academic Vocabulary

primary main, most important

Section Summary

REVIVING THE SOUTH'S ECONOMY

After the American Revolution, the use of slaves began to decline. Because crop prices fell, farmers planted less, so they needed less slave labor.

Cotton was not a new crop to the southern states. However, few farmers planted much, for the shortstaple cotton that grew well there was very hard to separate from its seeds. Northerner Eli Whitney changed that when he invented the **cotton gin**.

This hand-cranked cylinder easily pulled cotton and seeds apart. With the cotton gin, cotton crops became profitable. A cotton gin could clean as much cotton as planters could plant and their slaves could pick. A **planter** was a large-scale farmer who owned more than 20 slaves.

Why was it difficult to harvest cotton before the invention of the cotton gin?

Section 1, *continued*

THE COTTON BOOM

For southern farmers cotton had many advantages over other crops. Unlike food products cotton could be stored for long periods of time. Plus its lightness made it fairly inexpensive to transport. As a result, the cotton-supported slave trade grew, even as Congress worked to limit slavery in the nation.

Most of the country's cotton was produced in the **cotton belt**, which stretched from South Carolina to Texas. Without transportation systems such as roads and canals, southern farmers relied on rivers to move their cotton. When the cotton reached a port, the farmers sold their cotton to merchants who then contacted **factors** to arrange transportation for the cotton aboard trading ships.

What were the advantages of cotton compared to other crops?

Why were the region's rivers especially important to southern farmers?

OTHER CROPS AND INDUSTRIES

Scientific agriculture, or the use of scientific methods to improve farming, encouraged southern farmers to rotate the kinds of crops they planted. The **primary** food crop of the South was corn, but farmers also grew rice, sugarcane, wheat, tobacco, hemp, and flax. Some southerners encouraged the growth of industry. As a result, some industries, such as the **Tredegar Iron Works**, also flourished. Still, most of the South focused on farming.

Circle the definition of scientific agriculture.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Write to Explain What if a new fiber was discovered that replaced cotton in clothing? What effect would this development have on cotton planters? Write a paragraph explaining how falling cotton prices might lead to less demand for farm workers.

Section 1, *continued*

DIRECTIONS Look at each set of four vocabulary terms. On the line provided, write the letter of the term that does not relate to the others.

- | | |
|--|--|
| _____ 1. a. Eli Whitney
b. cotton gin
c. Joseph R. Anderson
d. planters | _____ 4. a. Joseph R. Anderson
b. cotton belt
c. planters
d. cotton gin |
| _____ 2. a. Joseph R. Anderson
b. planters
c. Tredegar Iron Works
d. industry | _____ 5. a. factors
b. Eli Whitney
c. Tredegar Iron Works
d. scientific agriculture |
| _____ 3. a. scientific agriculture
b. cotton belt
c. factors
d. Tredegar Iron Works | |

DIRECTIONS Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

6. The _____ was a simple device that used a hand-cranked cylinder with wire teeth to pull cotton fibers apart from the seeds.
(cotton gin/cotton belt)
7. _____ were large-scale farmers who held more than 20 slaves. (planters/factors)
8. The region that stretched from South Carolina to Texas became known as the _____, because it was the area that grew most of the country's cotton. (cotton gin/cotton belt)
9. The _____ in Richmond, Virginia, produced bridge materials, cannons, steam engines, and other products.
(Eli Whitney/Tredegar Iron Works)
10. Crop brokers called _____ managed the cotton trade in port cities. (planters/factors)