

CHAPTER 16

The South and the Slavery Controversy, 1793–1860

PART I: REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe the economic strengths and weaknesses of the Cotton Kingdom and its central role in the prosperity of Britain as well as the United States.
2. Outline the hierarchical social structure of the South, from the planter aristocracy to African American slaves.
3. Describe the nonslaveholding white majority of the South, and explain why most poorer whites supported slavery even though they owned no slaves.
4. Describe the workings of the peculiar institution of slavery, including the role of the domestic slave trade after the outlawing of international slave trading.
5. Describe African American life under slavery, including the role of the family and religion.
6. Describe the rise of abolitionism in both the United States and Britain, and explain why it was initially so unpopular in the North.
7. Describe the fierce southern resistance to abolitionism, and explain why southerners increasingly portrayed slavery as a positive good.

B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. **oligarchy** Rule by a small elite. “Before the Civil War, the South was in some respects not so much a democracy as an oligarchy. . . .”
2. **medievalism** Devotion to the social values, customs, or beliefs of the European Middle Ages, especially a fixed social hierarchy and code of honor. “Southern aristocrats . . . strove to perpetuate a type of medievalism that had died out in Europe. . . .”
3. **commission** Fee paid to an agent in a transaction, usually as a percentage of the sale. “They were pained by the heavy outward flow of commissions. . . .”
4. **middlemen** In commerce, those who stand between the producer and the retailer or consumer. “[Southern planters] were pained by the heavy outward flow . . . to northern middlemen, bankers, agents, and shippers.”
5. **racism** Belief in the superiority of one race over another or behavior reflecting such a belief. “Thus did the logic of economics join with the illogic of racism in buttressing the slave system.”

6. **squadron** A medium-sized military unit, especially naval or air, assigned to a specific task or purpose. “. . . the Royal Navy’s West African Squadron seized hundreds of slave ships. . . .”
7. **bankruptcy** In law, the condition of being declared unable to meet legitimate financial obligations or debts, therefore requiring special supervision by the courts. “. . . families were separated with distressing frequency, usually for economic reasons such as bankruptcy. . . .”
8. **overseer** Someone who governs or directs the work of another. “. . . under the watchful eyes and ready whip-hand of a white overseer or black ‘driver.’ ”
9. **sabotage** Intentional destruction or damage of goods, machines, or productive processes. “They sabotaged expensive equipment. . . .”
10. **fratricidal** Literally, concerning the killing of brothers; the term is often applied more broadly to the killing of relatives or countrymen in feuds or civil wars. (The killing of sisters is **sororicide**; of fathers **patricide**; and of mothers **matricide**.) “. . . supported a frightfully costly fratricidal war as the price of emancipation.”
11. **barbarism (barbarian)** The condition of being crude, uneducated, or uncivilized. “It was good for the Africans, who were lifted from the barbarism of the jungle. . . .”
12. **table (tabling)** In parliamentary rules of order, the act of setting aside a resolution or law without voting or taking action, positive or negative, on the proposal itself. “It required all such antislavery appeals to be tabled without debate.”

PART II: CHECKING YOUR PROGRESS

A. True-False

Where the statement is true, circle **T**; where it is false, circle **F**.

1. T F After 1800, the prosperity of both North and South became heavily dependent on growing, manufacturing, and exporting cotton.
2. T F The southern planter aristocracy was strongly attracted to medieval cultural ideals.
3. T F The growing of cotton on large plantations was economically efficient and agriculturally sound.
4. T F Most white southern women were critical of slavery because it threatened their marriage and family.
5. T F In 1860, three-fourths of all white southerners owned no slaves at all.
6. T F Poor whites supported slavery because it made them feel racially superior and because they hoped someday to be able to buy slaves.
7. T F Free blacks enjoyed considerable status and wealth in both the North and the South before the Civil War.
8. T F Despite the outlawing of the international slave trade in 1807–1808, African slaves continued to be smuggled into the United States as well as Brazil and the West Indies.
9. T F Most slaveowners treated their black slaves as a valuable economic investment.
10. T F Slavery almost completely destroyed the black family.
11. T F The *Amistad* uprising of 1839 was the most successful rebellion by American slaves in the South before the Civil War.

12. T F The greatest opposition to abolitionism in the North and Britain came from evangelical Christians.
13. T F The most prominent black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, supported William Lloyd Garrison's absolutist principles and refusal to seek a political solution to the sin of slavery.
14. T F After about 1830, all criticism of slavery was suppressed in the South, including a prohibition of delivery of abolitionist materials through the U.S. mail.
15. T F By 1860, most northerners had come to agree with the abolitionists that slavery was an evil to be immediately abolished.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and circle the corresponding letter.

1. By 1840, cotton had become central to the whole American economy because
 - a. the United States was still largely an agricultural nation.
 - b. cotton exports provided much of the capital that fueled American economic growth.
 - c. the North became the largest market for southern cotton production.
 - d. western expansion depended on continually increasing the acreage devoted to cotton.
 - e. northern agricultural products like wheat and corn could not be grown for a profit.
2. A large portion of the profits from the South's cotton growing went to
 - a. northern traders and European cloth manufacturers.
 - b. southern and northern slave traders.
 - c. southern textile industrialists.
 - d. Midwestern farmers and cattlemen.
 - e. small cotton growers.
3. Which of the following was *not* characteristic of the few thousand wealthiest southern plantation owners holding a hundred or more slaves?
 - a. They promoted the ideals of feudal, hierarchical medieval Europe.
 - b. They provided their children with elite private educations in Europe or the North.
 - c. They controlled a large proportion of the wealth and power of the entire South.
 - d. They felt a large sense of public obligation to pursue education and statecraft.
 - e. They did not permit their wives to have any role in managing their slaves and plantations.
4. Most southern slaveowners held
 - a. over a hundred slaves.
 - b. over fifty slaves.
 - c. about twenty slaves.
 - d. fewer than ten slaves.
 - e. only one slave.
5. Even though they owned no slaves, most southern whites strongly supported the slave system because they
 - a. were bribed by the planter class.
 - b. enjoyed the economic benefits of slavery.
 - c. felt racially superior to blacks and hoped to be able to buy slaves.
 - d. disliked the northern abolitionists.
 - e. accepted the idea that slavery was approved in the Bible.

6. The only group of white southerners who hated both slaveowners and blacks were
 - a. poor southern whites in the frontier areas of Texas and Arkansas.
 - b. urban merchants and manufacturers.
 - c. religious leaders.
 - d. Appalachian mountain whites.
 - e. women.
7. The condition of the 500,000 or so free blacks was
 - a. considerably better in the North than in the South.
 - b. notably improving in the decades before the Civil War.
 - c. causing a majority of them to favor emigration to Africa or the West Indies.
 - d. politically threatened but economically secure.
 - e. as bad or worse in the North than in the South.
8. One major consequence of the outlawing of the international slave trade by Britain and the United States was
 - a. a boom in slave trading inside the United States.
 - b. a complete end to the importation of any slaves from African into the United States.
 - c. a decline in the growth of the American slave population.
 - d. slaveowners' growing support for black family life so that natural reproduction would increase.
 - e. a movement to end the domestic U.S. slave trade as well.
9. Most slaveowners treated their slaves as
 - a. objects to be beaten and brutalized as often as possible.
 - b. economically profitable investments.
 - c. members of their extended family.
 - d. potential converts to evangelical Christianity.
 - e. sexual objects.
10. The African American family under slavery was
 - a. generally stable and mutually supportive.
 - b. almost nonexistent.
 - c. largely female-dominated.
 - d. seldom able to raise children to adulthood.
 - e. more stable on the small farms of the upper South than on large plantations.
11. Most of the early abolitionists were motivated by
 - a. a desire to send African Americans back to Africa.
 - b. anger at the negative economic impact of slavery on poorer whites.
 - c. a belief that slavery violated the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.
 - d. a philosophical commitment to racial equality.
 - e. religious feeling against the sin of slavery.
12. Frederick Douglass and some other black and white abolitionists sought to end slavery by
 - a. encouraging slave rebellions in the South.
 - b. calling on the North to secede from the Union and invade the South.
 - c. getting northern churches to condemn the sin of slavery.
 - d. promoting antislavery political movements like the Free Soil and Republican parties.
 - e. promoting education and economic opportunity for free blacks.

13. The last open debate inside the South regarding proposals to gradually abolish slavery occurred in
 - a. southern colleges in the 1830s.
 - b. the Southern Baptist Convention in 1850.
 - c. the Tennessee Appalachian Mountain areas in 1840–1841.
 - d. the Virginia state legislature in 1830–1831.
 - e. the Texas state legislature in 1848–1850.
14. The northern political leader who successfully defended the *Amistad* slave rebels and overturned the Gag Resolution in Congress was
 - a. congressman and former president John Quincy Adams.
 - b. black abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass.
 - c. Senator Daniel Webster.
 - d. religious revivalist Theodore Dwight Weld.
 - e. Illinois state legislator and congressman Abraham Lincoln.
15. By the 1850s, most northerners could be described as
 - a. opposed to slavery but also hostile to immediate abolitionists.
 - b. fervently in favor of immediate abolition.
 - c. sympathetic to white southern arguments in defense of slavery.
 - d. eager to let the slaveholding South break apart the Union.
 - e. hostile to the slave trade but tolerant of slavery.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

1. _____ Term for the ante-bellum South that emphasized its economic dependence on a single staple product
2. _____ British naval unit that seized hundreds of slave ships in the process of suppressing the illegal slave trade in the early 1800s
3. _____ Harriet Beecher Stowe’s powerful 1852 novel that focused on slavery’s cruel effects in separating black family members from one another
4. _____ The fertile region of the Deep South, stretching across Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, where the largest concentration of black slaves worked on rich cotton plantations
5. _____ Spanish slave ship, seized by revolting African slaves, that led to a dramatic U.S. Supreme Court case that freed the slaves.
6. _____ Theodore Dwight Weld’s powerful antislavery book
7. _____ Organization founded in 1817 to transport American blacks back to Africa
8. _____ African republic founded by freed American slaves in 1822
9. _____ The group of theology students, led by Theodore Dwight Weld, who were expelled from their seminary for abolitionist activity and later became leading preachers of the anti-slavery gospel
10. _____ William Lloyd Garrison’s fervent abolitionist newspaper that preached an immediate end to slavery
11. _____ Garrisonian abolitionist organization, founded in 1833, that included the eloquent Wendell Phillips among its leaders

12. _____ Classic autobiography written by the leading African American abolitionist,
13. _____ The line across the southern boundary of Pennsylvania that formed the boundary between free states and slave states in the East
14. _____ Strict rule passed by pro-southern Congressmen in 1836 to prohibit all discussion of slavery in the House of Representatives
15. _____ Northern antislavery politicians, like Abraham Lincoln, who rejected radical immediate abolitionism, but fought to prohibit the expansion of slavery in the western territories

D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. ___ Eli Whitney | a. New England patrician and Garrison follower whose eloquent attacks on slavery earned him the title “abolition’s golden trumpet” |
| 2. ___ Harriet Beecher Stowe | b. Visionary black preacher whose bloody slave rebellion in 1831 tightened the reins of slavery in the South |
| 3. ___ Nat Turner | c. Free black whose failed attempt to lead a slave revolt in Charleston, South Carolina, led to the execution of more than thirty of his followers |
| 4. ___ William Wilberforce | d. New York free black woman who fought for emancipation and women’s rights |
| 5. ___ Theodore Dwight Weld | e. Leading radical abolitionist who burned the Constitution as “a covenant with death and an agreement with hell” |
| 6. ___ Wendell Phillips | f. Author of an abolitionist novel that portrayed the separation of slave families by auction |
| 7. ___ Denmark Vesey | g. Wealthy New York abolitionist merchant whose home was ransacked by a proslavery mob in 1834 |
| 8. ___ William Lloyd Garrison | h. Inventor of a machine for extracting seeds from cotton that revolutionized the southern economy |
| 9. ___ David Walker | i. Black abolitionist who visited West Africa in 1859 to examine sites where African Americans might relocate |
| 10. ___ Sojourner Truth | j. Former president who won the <i>Amistad</i> rebellious slaves’ freedom and fought for the right to discuss slavery in Congress |
| 11. ___ Martin Delany | |
| 12. ___ Frederick Douglass | |
| 13. ___ Lewis Tappan | |
| 14. ___ John Quincy Adams | |
| 15. ___ Elijah Lovejoy | |

- k. Illinois editor whose death at the hands of a mob made him an abolitionist martyr
- l. British evangelical Christian reformer who in 1833 achieved the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies
- m. Escaped slave and great black abolitionist who fought to end slavery through political action
- n. Black abolitionist writer who called for a bloody end to slavery in an appeal of 1829
- o. Leader of the Lane Rebels who wrote the powerful antislavery work *American Slavery As It Is*

E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them from 1 to 5.

1. ___ The last slaves to be legally imported from Africa enter the United States.
2. ___ A radical abolitionist editor is murdered, and so becomes a martyr to the antislavery cause.
3. ___ A radical abolitionist newspaper and a slave rebellion spread fear through the South.
4. ___ A new invention increases the efficiency of cotton production, laying the basis for the vast Cotton Kingdom.
5. ___ A group of seminary students expelled for their abolitionist views spread the antislavery gospel far and wide.

F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

- | Cause | Effect |
|--|---|
| 1. ___ Whitney’s cotton gin and southern frontier expansionism | a. Often resulted in the cruel separation of black families |
| 2. ___ Excessive soil cultivation and financial speculation | b. Kept poor, nonslaveholding whites committed to a system that actually harmed them |
| 3. ___ Belief in white superiority and the hope of owning slaves | c. Aroused deep fears of rebellion and ended rational discussion of slavery in the South |
| 4. ___ The selling of slaves at auctions | d. Made abolitionists personally unpopular but convinced many Northerners that slavery was a threat to American |

5. ___ The slaves' love of freedom and hatred of their condition
6. ___ The religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening
7. ___ Politically minded abolitionists like Frederick Douglass
8. ___ Garrison's *Liberator* and Nat Turner's bloody slave rebellion
9. ___ White southern defenses of slavery as a positive good
10. ___ The constant abolitionist agitation in the North
- e. Caused slaves to work slowly, steal from their masters, and frequently run away
- f. Stirred a fervent abolitionist commitment to fight the sin of slavery
- g. Turned the South into a booming one-crop economy where "cotton was king"
- h. Opposed Garrison and organized the Liberty party and the Free Soil party
- i. Created dangerous weaknesses beneath the surface prosperity of the southern cotton economy
- j. Widened the moral and political gap between the white South and the rest of the Western world

G. Developing Historical Skills

Visual Images and Slavery

The bitter controversy over slavery is reflected in the visual images (drawings, prints, photographs) of the peculiar institution. Some images present slavery from an abolitionist viewpoint, as a moral horror. Others depict it in benign or even favorable terms. Examine the following photos or illustrations in this chapter: 1) A Market in People; 2) A Slave Auction; 3) The Cruelty of Slavery; 4) Slave Nurse and Young White Master; 5) Slaves Being Marched from Staunton, Virginia, to Tennessee; 6) Am I Not a Man and a Brother. Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?; and 7) In Defense of Slavery. Then answer the following questions.

- Which five images plainly depict negative features of the slave system? Which visual details point to the mistreatment of the slaves?
- How does the image, In Defense of Slavery, present the peculiar institution in a positive light. What are the visual points of contrast with the condition of British workers?
- The photograph of Slave Nurse and Young White Master seems neither directly "proslavery" nor "antislavery." How might supporters or opponents of slavery each interpret this image of a slave nanny with a white child?

H. Map Mastery

Map Discrimination

Using the maps and charts in Chapter 16, answer the following questions.

1. *Southern Cotton Production, 1860*: Which six states contained nearly all the major cotton-production areas of the South in 1860?
2. *Slaveowning Families, 1850*: Approximately how many slaveowning families owned fifty or more slaves?
3. *Distribution of Slaves, 1820*: Which five states contained a substantial number of slave-majority counties in 1820?
4. *Distribution of Slaves, 1860*: List the six slaveholding states, not counting Texas and Florida, that contained the most counties with less than 10 percent slaves in 1860.

Map Challenge

Using the maps of *Southern Cotton Production, 1820*, *Southern Cotton Production, 1860*, *Distribution of Slaves, 1820*, and *Distribution of Slaves, 1860*, write a brief essay explaining the relation between the areas of cotton production and the areas with the heaviest concentration of slaves in 1820 and 1860. Include some discussion of why Virginia and the Carolinas had substantial areas with more than 50 percent slaves but almost no major cotton-production areas.

PART III: APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

1. Describe the complex structure of southern society. How was the wealth and status of plantation owners, small slaveholders, independent white farmers, poor whites, free blacks, and black slaves each fundamentally shaped by the peculiar institution of slavery?
2. Compare the attitudes and practices regarding slavery and race relations in the North and the South. Were northerners, at bottom, any more or less racist in their attitudes toward blacks than southern whites.
3. How did the reliance on cotton production and slavery affect the South economically, socially, and morally, and how did this reliance affect its relations with the North?
4. How did slavery affect the lives of African Americans in both the South and the North?
5. A large majority of Americans, both North and South, strongly rejected radical abolitionism. How, then, was radical abolitionism able to transform the public atmosphere regarding slavery, creating fierce sectional polarization around the issue by the 1850s?

6. In what ways did slavery make the South a fundamentally different kind of society from the North? In suppressing debate and free speech and declaring slavery to be a positive good and a great achievement, was the South really turning against the American Revolutionary heritage of freedom and equality in favor of a medieval ideal of hierarchy and inequality?
7. If you had been an ordinary northern citizen in the 1830s or 1840s, what would you have proposed to do about the Central American problem of slavery, and why? Would either William Lloyd Garrison's radical abolitionism or Frederick Douglass's political abolitionism or Abraham Lincoln's free soil doctrine have appealed to you. Why or why not?