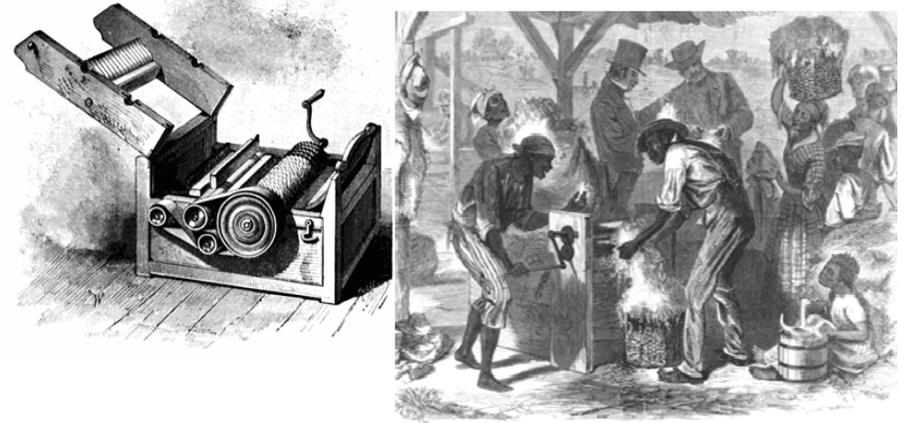


^c **Slavery and the Cotton Gin**

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: What impact did the cotton gin have the institution of slavery during the 19th century?

Cotton Gin Background

1. How did the cotton gin make the harvesting of cotton more efficient?
2. How effective was the cotton gin at processing cotton? (cite statistics)
3. What impact did cotton ultimately have on American economy?



Slave Population 1820



Slave Population 1860



Compare the two maps to the left. Each depicts the slave population in the South in different years. Provide two conclusion that can be made through the comparison of these maps.

U.S. Slave Population 1820 and 1860

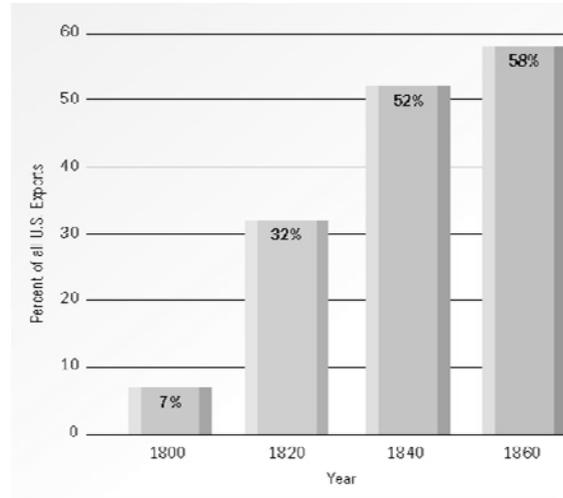
TABLE 6-1 U.S. SLAVE POPULATION, 1820 AND 1860

	1820	1860
<i>United States</i>	1,538,125	3,953,760
<i>North</i>	19,108	64
<i>South</i>	1,519,017	3,953,696
<i>Upper South</i>	965,514	1,530,229
<i>Delaware</i>	4,509	1,798
<i>Kentucky</i>	127,732	225,483
<i>Maryland</i>	107,397	87,189
<i>Missouri</i>	10,222	114,931
<i>North Carolina</i>	205,017	331,059
<i>Tennessee</i>	80,107	275,719
<i>Virginia</i>	425,153	490,865
<i>Washington, D.C.</i>	6,377	3,185
<i>Lower South</i>	553,503	2,423,467
<i>Alabama</i>	41,879	435,080
<i>Arkansas</i>	1,617	111,115
<i>Florida</i>	*	61,745
<i>Georgia</i>	149,654	482,198
<i>Louisiana</i>	69,064	331,726
<i>Mississippi</i>	32,814	436,631
<i>South Carolina</i>	258,475	402,406
<i>Texas</i>	*	182,566

*Florida and Texas were not states in 1820.

Source: Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: New Press, 1974), 396-97.

Percent of all U.S. Exports



The graph to the left depicts the percentage of all U.S. exports that were cotton. Based on the graph, how did the cotton gin change the influence the south had on the American economy? (cite specific statistics)

Table 6-1 U.S. Slave Population 1820 & 1860

- Describe what occurred to the slave population between 1820 and 1860. Cite specific data.
- How prevalent was slavery in North by 1860?
- What states experience the greatest increase in slavery?
- What southern states experience a decrease in slavery between 1820 and 1860?

Cotton Gin & Slave Life

- Please describe this particular slave's daily schedule from morning to night.
- Slaves approach the gin-house with such fear. What happens if the slave:
 - Falls short in weight? Exceeds the weight of cotton he/she is supposed to pick for the day?
- ON YOUR OWN: Describe how the cotton gin was both a "blessing and a curse."



Cotton Gin Background

Cotton is a soft fiber that grows around the seeds of the cotton plant. The seeds are sticky and sometimes difficult to separate from the cotton fiber. Before the invention of the cotton gin, in 1793, the process was extremely labor-intensive.



The cotton gin, a mechanical device which removes the seeds from cotton was invented by Eli Whitney in 1793. This new device could generate up to 50 pounds of cleaned cotton daily. This was double what could be cleaned by hand and helped make cotton production a lucrative business. It contributed to the economic growth of the Southern states of the US, a prime cotton-growing area. By 1860, cotton production represented more than half of all US exports. Some historians believe the invention also reinvigorated the slave economy and added decades to its life.

By the early part of the 19th Century, the Southern economy depended on the labor of African American slaves forced into providing cheap or free labor. In 1810 there were 1.2 million African American slaves in the US. By 1860 there were 4 million. Slaves were concentrated on the large plantations of about 10,000 big planters. Each of these plantations held 50-100 or more slaves.

Cotton Gin & Slave Life

Slaves were forbidden by law to learn to read or write. As a result we have few written accounts of their lives. However, Solomon Northup's account survived. He was a New Yorker and a freeman when he was kidnapped and sold as a slave in 1841. The following excerpt is a description of the time he spent on a cotton plantation in Louisiana.

"The hands are required to be in the cotton field as soon as it is light in the morning, and, with the exception of ten or fifteen minutes, which is given them at noon to swallow their allowance of cold bacon, they are not permitted to be a moment idle until it is too dark to see, and when the



moon is full, they often times labor till the middle of the night. They do not dare to stop even at dinner time, nor return to the quarters, however late it be until the order to halt is given by the driver. The day's work over in the field, the baskets are "toted," or in other words, carried to the gin-house, where the cotton is weighed. No matter how fatigued and weary he may be -- no matter how much he longs for sleep and rest -- a slave never approaches the gin-house with his basket of cotton but with fear. If it falls short in weight -- if he has not performed the full task appointed of him, he knows that he must suffer. And if he has exceeded it by ten or twenty pounds, in all probability his master will measure the next day's task accordingly. So, whether he has too little or too much, his approach to the gin-house is always with fear and trembling."

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