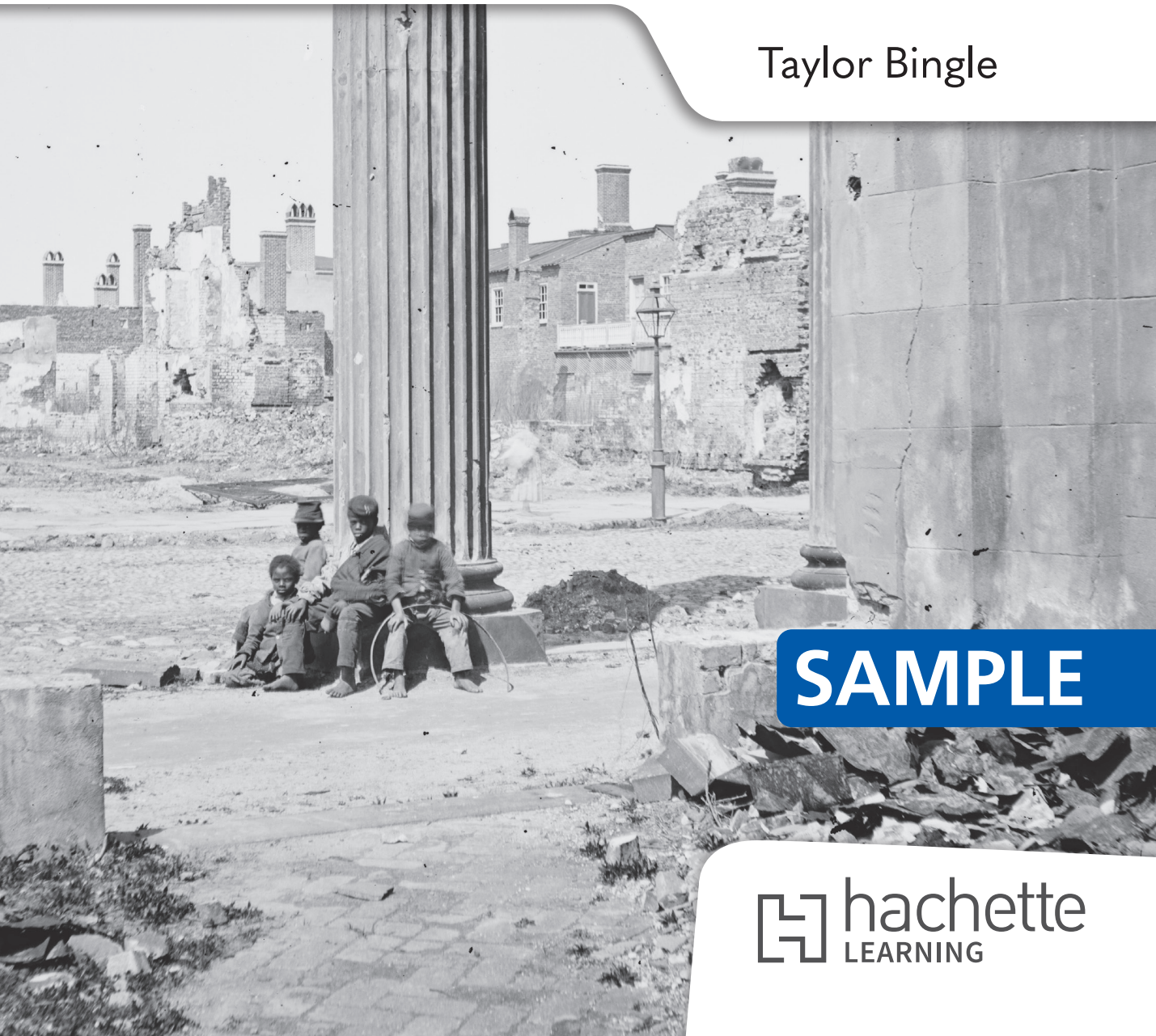


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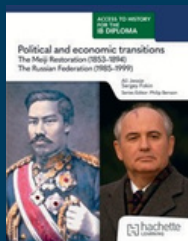
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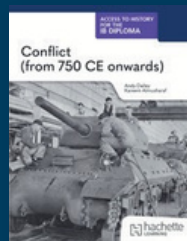
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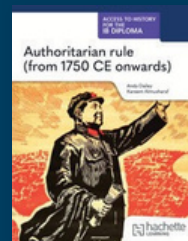
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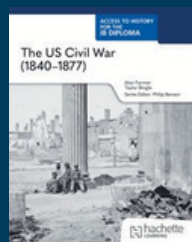
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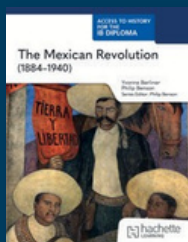
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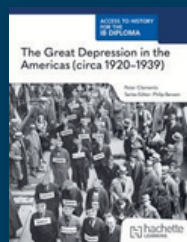
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**ACCESS TO HISTORY
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The US Civil War (1840–1877)

Taylor Bingle
Series Editor: Philip Benson

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Dedication

○ Keith Randell (1943–2002)

The original Access to History series was conceived and developed by Keith, who created a series to 'cater for students as they are, not as we might wish them to be'. He leaves a living legacy of a series that for over 20 years has provided a trusted, stimulating and well-loved accompaniment to post-16 study. Our aim with these new editions for the IB is to continue to offer students the best possible support for their studies.

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Impact of the system of slavery on the United States

The institution of slavery profoundly shaped the economic, social, and political development of the United States from the colonial period through the Civil War. Slavery has existed in various forms throughout human history but the chattel slavery system that emerged in North America was distinctive in its racial basis, its scale, and its integration into a modern capitalist economy. Understanding slavery's impact requires examining not only the experiences of the nearly four million people held in bondage by 1860, but also the ways this system influenced every aspect of American life, from debates over constitutional principles in Congress to the price of cotton internationally. This chapter will consider the following questions:

- ★ To what extent did the cotton economy shape the economic development of the United States before 1860?
- ★ To what extent did the conditions of enslavement deny the humanity of enslaved people in the United States?
- ★ To what extent did enslaved people use adaptation and resistance to challenge the system of slavery?
- ★ To what extent did the political impacts of slavery, including the abolitionist debate, shape the United States before 1861?

KEY DATES

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1619 First enslaved Africans arrive in Virginia | 1829 David Walker publishes <i>Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World</i> |
| 1662 Virginia adopts <i>partus sequitur ventrem</i> (children inherit mother's legal status) | 1831 William Lloyd Garrison launches <i>The Liberator</i> in Boston |
| 1705 Virginia declares enslaved people 'real estate' | 1831 Nat Turner's Rebellion in Virginia |
| 1740 South Carolina enacts slave codes, the model for Southern slave law | 1833 American Anti-Slavery Society founded |
| 1787 Constitutional Convention writes the Three-Fifths, Fugitive Slave, and slave-trade clauses | 1836 House of Representatives passes the Gag Rule |
| 1793 Eli Whitney patents the cotton gin | 1837 John C. Calhoun declares slavery 'a positive good' in the Senate |
| 1800 Gabriel's Rebellion betrayed in Virginia | 1845 Frederick Douglass publishes his <i>Narrative</i> |
| 1808 Congress bans the international slave trade | 1849 Harriet Tubman escapes from Maryland |
| 1822 Denmark Vesey's conspiracy uncovered in Charleston | 1854 Republican Party founded |

1 Economic impacts of the cotton economy

► **Key question:** *To what extent did the cotton economy shape the economic development of the United States before 1860?*

Before the system: the people

Before we discuss cotton production, economic systems, or political debates, we must acknowledge a fundamental truth: slavery was a system of violence built on the destruction of human lives, families, and futures. The nearly four million people held in bondage by 1860 were not abstractions or statistics: they were mothers and fathers, children and grandparents, human beings with talents, dreams, and an unquenchable desire for freedom. They were people whose humanity was systematically denied by a legal and economic system of violence and exploitation, one that treated them as property.

The first documented arrival of enslaved Africans in British North America came in 1619, when approximately 20 Africans were brought to Point Comfort, Virginia, aboard a Dutch ship. These individuals arrived in a colony where the legal status of African people was still unclear. For several decades, some Africans in the British colonies lived in conditions similar to indentured servitude, with the possibility of eventually gaining freedom. But colonial **legislatures**, driven by economic greed and a desire for total control over labour, began constructing an elaborate legal framework to transform temporary servitude into permanent, hereditary racial slavery.

How did colonial legislatures transform the status of Africans from temporary servitude into permanent racial slavery?

KEY TERM

Legislatures Lawmaking bodies of elected representatives.



Pause and look carefully at this photograph before reading further. If the system of slavery was designed to deny human beings their humanity, what message does this image communicate instead?

SOURCE A

Photograph of five generations of an enslaved Black American family, all born on the plantation of JJ Smith, Beaufort, South Carolina, by Timothy O'Sullivan, 1862. O'Sullivan photographed the family in their plantation environment after the Union Army's occupation of Beaufort during the Civil War.



How did colonial legislatures use law to transform African people into hereditary, racialized property?

The legal construction of racial slavery

The transformation of African people from human beings with rights into property began through deliberate legal engineering. Virginia's 1662 **statute** marked a turning point. The law stated:

Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free, Be it therefore enacted and declared... that all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.

This doctrine, known as *partus sequitur ventrem* ('that which is brought forth follows the womb'), meant that children of enslaved mothers would inherit their mother's enslaved status, regardless of their father's status or race. This was a radical break from English common law tradition, which traced status through the father. Instead, colonial legislators adopted a Roman legal principle that had been applied 'among tame and domestic animals,' explicitly treating enslaved women like livestock whose offspring belonged to their owner.



KEY TERM

Statute A law passed by a legislature.

By 1705, Virginia had gone further, declaring that enslaved people were ‘real estate’ rather than personal property. Now, they could be inherited like land, bought and sold like buildings, and seized for debt like other assets. Other colonies quickly adopted similar laws, spreading the system of hereditary racial slavery throughout British North America. The implications of these early laws were devastating:

- **People became property:** Enslaved people could be bought, sold, inherited, mortgaged, and seized for debt like land or livestock.
- **Slavery became hereditary:** Children inherited their mother’s enslaved status regardless of their father’s race or status, ensuring slavery would continue across generations.
- **Sexual violence became profitable:** White men could rape enslaved women with complete impunity, and children born from these assaults were enslaved, creating economic incentives for rape.
- **Children were denied humanity from birth:** Mixed-race children, often fathered by their mother’s enslavers, inherited enslavement with no recognition of kinship or paternal responsibility.
- **All legal rights were stripped:** Enslaved people could not testify in court, own property, make contracts, or access legal protection.
- **Family bonds had no legal recognition:** Marriages were not legally recognized, and families could be separated through sale at any time.

The remainder of this chapter will examine the economic, social, and political dimensions of slavery’s impact on the United States and on millions of enslaved people. But as you read about cotton production, political compromises, and economic statistics, remember: behind every number was a person; behind every policy was a family torn apart; behind every economic calculation was a human being whose labour was stolen, whose freedom was denied, and whose humanity was constantly asserted despite a system designed to destroy it.

This is not ancient history. The legal framework of racial slavery established in 1662 continued in different forms after the Civil War. The ideology of white supremacy developed to justify slavery persisted through Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, and beyond. The wealth generated by stolen labour shaped American economic development in ways we still see today. And the resistance of enslaved people laid the groundwork for subsequent struggles for civil rights in America.

Slavery was a moral catastrophe built on the lie that some human beings could own others. But it was also real, and its consequences shaped the United States of today. Understanding how this system worked, how people resisted it, and why it finally ended requires us to see both the system’s structure and the humanity of those it sought to destroy.

ACTIVITY

Consequence

Each of these legal provisions had a specific human consequence. Which provision do you think did the most lasting damage beyond slavery’s formal end in 1865? What makes you say that?

TOK

Does knowing about a historical injustice carry the same ethical weight as the responsibility to be honest about it?

How did the expansion of cotton drive the growth of slavery?

KEY TERM

Cotton gin A machine that separates cotton fibres from seeds, dramatically increasing processing speed.

? Compare the rates of growth in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 after 1790. What does the relationship between enslaved population growth and cotton production reveal about the link between the two? Did cotton drive slavery's expansion, or did slavery enable cotton's expansion? What additional sources would a historian need to argue causation rather than coincidence?

The rise of King Cotton and the economy

The economic landscape of the United States was transformed in the early 19th century by a single technological innovation and a growing global demand for cotton. In 1793, when Eli Whitney patented the **cotton gin**, it revolutionized cotton production by making it economically viable. Before the cotton gin, removing seeds from cotton was difficult manual labour. One person could clean about one pound of cotton per day. Whitney's device allowed a single worker to process nearly 50 pounds daily.

As demand for cotton grew, so too did the need for labour. Southern planters moved quickly to capitalize. In the early 19th century, they carried slavery into nearly every area of the South.

As demand for cotton grew, so too did the need for labour to plant and pick it. Southern planters met this need by carrying slavery into nearly every area of the South. Of the approximately one million enslaved people who were forcibly moved into the southwest to transform the deep South into what contemporaries called the 'Cotton Kingdom,' historians estimate that more than two-thirds were sold by slave traders. Simultaneously, the enslaved population of the US quickly expanded, roughly doubling every 30 years. With the importation of enslaved Africans banned by Congress in 1808, this growth came almost entirely from natural increase and the internal domestic slave trade.

Key ■ Colonial British North America ■ United States

Year	Enslaved population	Change	Growth (relative to 1860)
1700	~28,000	—	■
1730	~91,000 est.	+225%	■
1760	~325,000 est.	+257%	■
1790	~700,000	+115%	■
1820	~1,500,000	+114%	■
1850	~3,200,000	+113%	■
1860	~3,950,000	+23%	■

Table 1.1 The growth of enslaved peoples from 1700–1860.

Key  Pre-cotton gin era  Post-cotton gin era

Year	Production (bales)	Change	US export share	Growth (relative to 1860)
1700	~3,000	– pre-gin	negligible	
1800	~156,000	+5,100%	~7%	
1820	~500,000	+221%	~32%	
1830	~750,000	+50%	~41%	
1840	~1,350,000	+80%	~52%	
1850	~2,850,000	+111%	~55%	
1860	~4,000,000 peak	+40%	~60%	

Table 1.2 The growth of cotton production in the US from 1700–1860.

‘Cotton is king’

As a result, cotton production in the US exploded from approximately 3,000 bales in 1790 to 4.5 million bales by 1860. According to economic historians, by the eve of the Civil War, cotton constituted nearly 60% of total US exports, making it the nation’s most valuable export commodity. The income it generated helped finance industry, transportation, government, and legal services across the US. Walter Johnson, in *Soul by Soul*, describes cotton as the catalyst for transforming the Deep South into ‘the richest staple-producing region of the world.’ Historian James Huston has noted that ‘as long as cotton was king, it produced a per-capita income comparable to the national average.’

In 1850, Governor John Quitman of Mississippi told his state legislature that slavery was the interest upon which ‘are founded the prosperity, the happiness, and the very existence of the people of fourteen States of this Union’. In 1855, pro-slavery writer David Christy gave that conviction its most famous title, *Cotton is King*. Political leaders echoed his sentiment. In March 1858, South Carolina Senator James Henry Hammond asked the US Senate, ‘What would happen if no cotton was furnished for three years?’ He followed, arguing that ‘England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her, save the South.’ He then quieted the chamber by almost threatening those in attendance: ‘No, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares to make war upon it.

Cotton is king.’ The phrase quickly became a rallying cry for Southern politicians and slaveholders who believed cotton made them economically indispensable to the nation and the world.

The cotton boom drove expansion of slavery westward into what became known as the **Cotton Belt**. The richest cotton lands, particularly in the Mississippi Delta, produced enormous wealth for planters. According to economic data from the period, by 1860 Mississippi and South Carolina

Why did Southern leaders believe cotton made them economically indispensable to the nation and the world?

KEY TERMS

Cotton is king Slogan expressing cotton’s dominance in the US economy and its perceived power.

Cotton Belt The Deep South region of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas where cotton cultivation and slavery were most concentrated.

KEY TERM

Per capita Per person, calculated by dividing total by population (enslaved people counted as property for personal wealth and as a state's population).



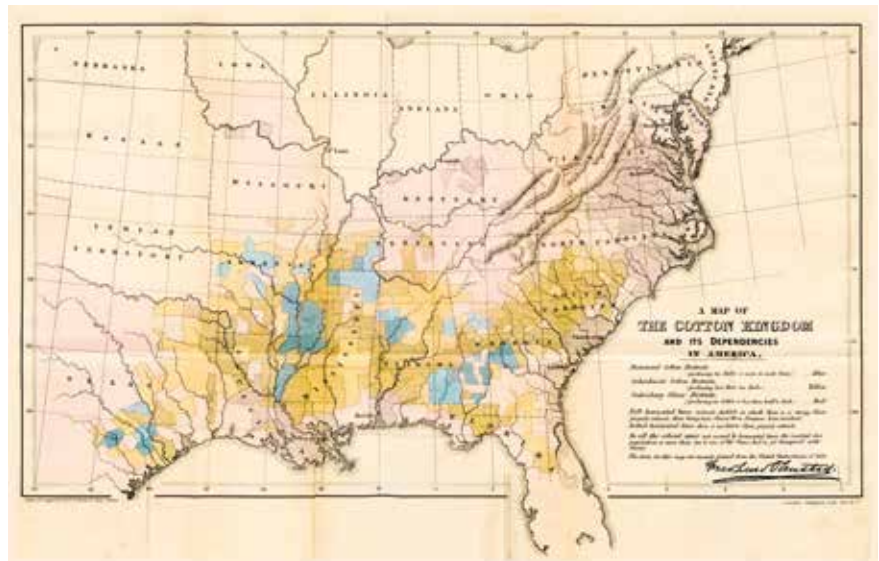
Explain how the content of Source B can be used to answer questions regarding the impact of cotton production in the United States.

(both of which had more than 50% of their population enslaved) were among the wealthiest states **per capita** in the nation, though this wealth was concentrated in the hands of a small white planter elite.

Contemporary pro-slavery writers, and those that would emerge after the Civil War, used per-capita wealth figures like these to argue that slavery had produced a refined Southern society superior to the industrialising North. Southern per-capita statistics make it sound like everyone in the South was well off, but in reality enslaved people were part of the statistics yet excluded from their benefits.

SOURCE B

Map of the Cotton Belt in the American South during the Slave Trade, published in 1861.



What was the domestic slave trade, and how significant was it to the spread of slavery?

KEY TERM

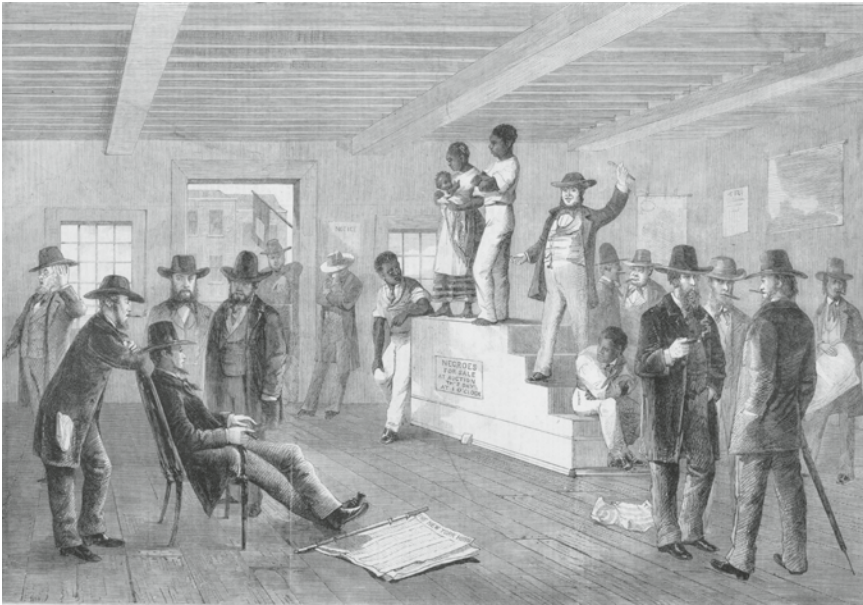
Domestic slave trade The buying and selling of enslaved people internally within the United States.

The domestic slave trade

The expansion of cotton created an increased demand for labour, which was met through the forced migration of enslaved people from the Upper South to the Deep South, or Cotton Belt. According to historian Walter Johnson, the **domestic slave trade** was a key mechanism in the expansion of slavery and the spread of cotton cultivation. As a result, it became a massive and brutal business enterprise. Historians estimate that approximately one million enslaved people were forcibly relocated from states like Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky to the cotton frontier of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana between 1790 and 1860. Slave trading centres emerged in major cities, where auction houses sold human beings like livestock.

SOURCE C

Wood engraving based on an eyewitness sketch of a slave auction, Virginia, 1861.



Explain how the content of Source C can be used to answer questions about the human cost of slavery.

?

The economic value of enslaved people was staggering, and, as Walter Johnson in *Soul by Soul* and Edward Baptist in *The Half Has Never Been Told*, have argued, the very idea of reducing human beings to an economic price tag was at the foundation of the dehumanizing system of slavery. Historians such as Steven Deyle have calculated that by 1860, the nearly four million enslaved people in the USA had an estimated market value of approximately \$3 billion, more than all the capital invested in railroads and factories combined. This meant that slavery represented the single largest concentration of capital in the US economy. For individual slaveholders, enslaved people were often their most valuable assets. A skilled enslaved craftsman in 1860 might be valued at \$2,000 to \$3,000, equivalent to over \$60,000 in today's currency. Enslaved people had monetary values assessed based on age, gender, health, and skills, a practice that treated human beings as **chattel**.

 KEY TERM

Chattel Movable personal property, including enslaved people who were legally owned and could be bought and sold.

Frederick Douglass, who endured this process firsthand as a teenager when his enslaver died and his estate was appraised for division among heirs, described what such a valuation actually meant.

SOURCE D

Excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, by Frederick Douglass, 1845. Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland and escaped to the North in 1838 where he became a writer, prolific orator, and a leading figure in the abolitionist movement.

I was immediately sent for, to be valued with the other property. Here again my feelings rose up in detestation of slavery. I had now a new conception of my degraded condition. [...] There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination. Silvery-headed age and sprightly youth, maids and matrons, had to undergo the same indelicate inspection. At this moment, I saw more clearly than ever the brutalizing effects of slavery upon both slave and slaveholder.

Economic category	Estimated value (1860 \$)
Enslaved people	3,000,000,000
Investment in railroads	1,166,422,729
Investment in manufacturing	1,050,000,000
Livestock	1,098,862,355
Farm implements	246,125,064
Bank capital	227,469,077
Home productions	27,484,144

Table 1.3 Wealth estimates of the US in 1860 by economic category. Data from *Preliminary Report on the Eighth Census, 1860*.

SOURCE E

Excerpt from *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power*, by Gene Dattel, published by Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009. Dattel is an independent scholar.

In the nineteenth century, only cotton, white gold, provided the ideal medium for the growth of a vast slave culture. And so cotton, slavery, and race became intertwined. Responsibility for the system of slavery was pervasive – in the North, the South, and on the American frontier... The cotton empire of the nineteenth century became a truly integrated national and international operation, perhaps the first complex global business. Cotton connected the South with the North, the West, and Europe. Finance, politics, business structure, transportation, distribution, and international relations were all parts of the cotton web... And because slavery was a crucial part of the cotton business, slaves could be bought and sold at a public market controlled by commercial law; slaves, a tragic form of collateral, could be financed.



Examine how the perspectives in Sources D and E and Table 1.3 can be used to answer questions regarding the impact of the domestic slave trade.

The Cotton Triangle: North–South connections

Cotton produced by enslaved labour flowed into a national and global economic system that enriched Northern and British merchants, bankers, and manufacturers. This economic relationship created the ‘**Cotton Triangle**’ in which Southern planters sold raw cotton to Northern manufacturers and British textile mills, whose factories produced finished textiles that were sold domestically and internationally.

The economic benefits of slavery were thus not exclusive to the South. While slavery was primarily a Southern institution, Northern and British economies were deeply connected to and dependent upon it. The textile mills of New England, concentrated in cities like Lowell and Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island, were the nation’s first major industrial textile factories, and they relied almost entirely on Southern cotton. According to economic historian Ronald Bailey, by 1860, total US cotton production exceeded 2 billion pounds annually and Northern textile mills consumed 25% of it annually, nearly 300 million pounds. The other 75% was exported abroad, primarily to Britain, fuelling its textile industry and Industrial Revolution.

Profits in this triangle flowed to Northern industrialists, Southern planters, and transatlantic merchants. According to historian Sven Beckert, Northern financial institutions were deeply complicit in slavery, profiting from every stage of cotton’s journey from field to factory. New York City emerged as the financial centre of this system, with banks providing credit to planters, insurance companies insuring cotton shipments and enslaved people as property, and Northern shipping companies transporting goods. It has been estimated that by the 1850s, nearly 40% of New York City’s economy was tied to slavery.

Slavery and Northern complicity

Slavery’s economic reach did not stop at the **Mason-Dixon Line**. The wealth it generated bound white Northerners to the system as tightly as it bound white Southerners, producing a racial and economic alliance that crossed sectional lines. Northern textile mills needed Southern cotton. Northern banks financed Southern plantations. Northern shipping firms carried Southern crops to Europe. The profits of slavery flowed North as readily as South, and many wealthy white Northerners had no interest in disturbing a system that made them rich. They, like Southern slaveholders, believed slavery reflected the natural order of racial hierarchy. Northern politicians who defended slavery to protect these commercial interests were called **doughfaces**. They shared not only the economic interests of Southern slaveholders but also their racial assumptions, and they used their political influence to protect Northern



KEY TERM

Cotton Triangle Trade route linking South, North, and Europe through cotton.

Mason-Dixon Line Symbolic dividing line between free and slave states.

Doughfaces Northern politicians who supported slavery, motivated by both economic interest and shared racial assumptions with Southern slaveholders.

ATL

Research and Thinking skills

Research the extent to which a specific Northern institution (such as a bank, insurance company, university, textile firm, etc.) profited from slavery before 1860. Many institutions have conducted and published their own ‘slavery history reports’. Using these reports and specific evidence from your chosen institution such as its trade in slave-grown goods, loans or credit extended to slaveholders, insurance policies on enslaved people, or founding capital tied to slavery profits, and answer the question: To what extent do you agree with Sven Beckert’s claim that Northern financial institutions were ‘deeply complicit’ in slavery?

profits and block anti-slavery measures in Congress. Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts attacked this alliance in an 1848 speech, calling it an 'unhallowed union' between Southern slaveholders and Northern commercial interests, an alliance between what he memorably named 'the lords of the lash and the lords of the loom.'



Examine how the perspective in Source F can be used to answer questions regarding the relationship between 'the lords of the lash and the lords of the loom'.

SOURCE F

Excerpt from 'Union Among Men of all Parties Against the Slave Power and the Extension Of Slavery,' Speech before a Mass Convention at Worcester, by Charles Sumner, June 28, 1848. Sumner was a Free Soil Party (see p.00) candidate for Congress and became a US Senator in 1851.

I speak only what is now too notorious, when I say that it was the secret influence which went forth from among ourselves that contributed powerfully to this consummation. Yes! it was brought about by an unhallowed union – conspiracy let it be called – between two remote sections: between the politicians of the Southwest and the politicians of the Northeast, – between the cotton-planters and flesh-mongers of Louisiana and Mississippi and the cotton-spinners and traffickers of New England, – between the lords of the lash and the lords of the loom.

How did dependence on slavery cause the Southern economy to develop differently from the Northern economy by 1860?

Two economies, diverging paths

The wealth generated by cotton and slavery did not produce a balanced or diversified Southern economy. Southern capital was concentrated in land and enslaved people, so the South invested little in infrastructure, manufacturing, and urban growth. By 1860, the North had roughly 20,000 miles of railroad to the South's 9,000, and the North had developed a diversified economy of manufacturing and finance, while the South remained dependent on a few staple crops, particularly cotton and tobacco. These differences were not accidental. They were the structural result of an economy organized around slavery, and by 1860 they had produced two regions whose labour systems, transportation networks, urbanization patterns, and visions of the future had sharply diverged.

ACTIVITY

Cause and consequence

Using only the information in this section, identify three consequences that followed the invention of the cotton gin: one economic, one demographic, and one geographic. For each, explain why the gin caused it, not just that it followed in time. Which consequence do you think mattered most, and why?

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Taylor Bingle is an experienced IB educator with over a decade of teaching IB Diploma Programme History. He is an IB Workshop Leader and currently teaches at the American School of Barcelona, where he fosters inquiry-based learning and global citizenship.

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