

CHAPTER 10

The Rise of the South, 1815–1860

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The theme of Chapter 10 is the economic, institutional, and social development of southern society between 1815 and 1860. Material throughout the chapter elaborates and supports the idea that the growth, change, and prosperity of southern society during those forty-five years reinforced the economic, social, and institutional patterns that were already present. At the center of those patterns was the institution of slavery, which “affected not only economics but values, customs, laws, class structure, and the region’s relationship to the nation and the world.” The transition of the South from a “society with slaves” to a “slave society” occurred in a Western world that was moving quickly toward a free-market economy based on the free-wage-labor system. Therefore, the South, out of step with the rest of the Western world, assumed a defensive posture toward anyone who spoke even one word against its “peculiar institution.” By doing so, a conservative South hardened into a reactionary South, with slavery as the catalyst.

Although the South was similar to the North in some respects, its commitment to slavery and its rural and agrarian character made it distinct. As southerners began to expand into the Old Southwest, an expansion that gave rise to the Cotton South, slavery became even more firmly entrenched than before. While this expansion gave rise to a new plantation elite, the South remained an agrarian society with a thin population distribution, weak institutions, and few urban centers or factories. Within this society, southerners increasingly offered arguments to defend their slave-based labor system. While some used the Bible and history to defend slavery, others defended the institution in practical economic terms. Furthermore, the defenders of slavery expressed the belief that not only had the social order been ordained by nature and God, but that any change in society should be slow and incremental. Although southerners expressed a variety of arguments to defend slavery, a “deep and abiding racism” was at the heart of the proslavery defense.

In “Southern Expansion, Indian Resistance, and Removal” we see that southern expansion into the Old Southwest and the ultimate emergence of the “Cotton Kingdom” took place at the expense of Native Americans who continued their struggle to retain their belief and value systems. After the defeat of the pan-Indian movement of Tecumseh and Prophet, the United States government adopted the policy of assimilation. Ultimately, however, the United States chose to remove the eastern Indians to western reservations, resulting in the Trail of Tears.

In “Limits of Mobility in a Hierarchical Society,” “Slave Life and Labor,” and “Slave Culture and Resistance” we turn to a discussion of the groups that collectively made up southern society: (1) yeoman farmers, (2) landless whites, (3) free blacks, (4) slaveowners, and (5) slaves. Frequent moves characterized the lives of many yeomen, and most yeomen stressed the values of hard work, self-reliance, and personal liberty. Whether striving to become planters or content with their lives as small landowners, most yeomen derived some sense of security from land-ownership. This was not true of landless whites and free blacks. Despite the distance between slaveowners and nonslaveowners, the South for a variety of reasons had been relatively free of class conflict. But between 1830 and 1860, the hardening of class lines, the widening of the gap between rich and poor, and the underrepresentation of yeomen farmers in state legislatures began to create more tension between slaveholders and nonslaveholders. This led to successful

democratic reform movements, especially in the more recently settled states in the Old Southwest. However, despite the relative success of these movements, those of the planter class remained determined in their resolve to hold the ultimate reins of power.

After briefly discussing the factors that characterized the lives of landless whites and free blacks, we look at the upper end of the class spectrum. The wealthy men who dominated this group held paternalistic attitudes toward both blacks and women. These attitudes, which actually hid harsher racist and sexist assumptions, dominated the master-slave relationship as well as the male-female relationship. From the evidence presented, it is obvious that southern women had fewer choices than their northern counterparts and, therefore, less control over their lives and bodies. Within this context, slavery was, in a sexual sense, a source of trouble to women; and, since women viewed slavery differently from the way men viewed it, some women began to question the morality of the institution. Although some women began to speak out against slavery, most were silenced by the men who dominated their lives.

Next we move to a discussion of the general conditions of slave life and the emergence of slave culture. We learn about the slave diet, housing conditions, work routines, and the physical and mental abuses present in the slave system. The theme that runs through the sections on slave life and culture is the variety of ways in which slaves strove to retain a sense of mental independence and self-respect despite their bondage. For all the paternalism of the whites, tension was clearly the determining factor in the relationship between slave and master. Indeed, black culture was born of the refusal of blacks to accept slavery or to give up their struggle against it. This constant resistance to slavery manifested itself in a variety of covert ways; yet, as may be seen in the Denmark Vesey conspiracy and in the Nat Turner rebellion, resistance was sometimes overt. Because the major fear in a slave society is the fear of a slave insurrection, such overt resistance almost always led to more laws of control being enacted and, thus, to a further hardening of the institution of slavery. In fact, in the aftermath of the Nat Turner rebellion, the Virginia legislature debated a law that would have gradually abolished slavery in the state. However, that law was defeated and Virginia, instead, “opted to do nothing except reinforce its own moral and economic defenses of slavery.”

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss the similarities and differences between the North and the South in the period from 1830 to 1860.
2. Discuss the arguments advanced by southerners to justify the institution of slavery.
3. Discuss the impact of an expansive, agrarian, slave-based economy on the development of southern society and on southern values, customs, and laws during the first half of the nineteenth century.
4. Discuss the policies of the United States toward Native Americans during the first half of the nineteenth century and the Indians' varying responses to those policies.
5. Discuss the characteristics of the lives of yeoman farmers, landless whites, and free blacks, and explain the value system of each.
6. Analyze the relations between planters and yeomen between 1830 and 1860.

7. Explain the factors responsible for the emergence of “the cotton South,” and discuss the impact of the cotton boom on southern society.
8. Discuss the characteristics of the lives of slaveowners, and explain their value system as well as their attitudes toward slavery, blacks, and women.
9. Describe the lives and attitudes of southern women in the first half of the nineteenth century.
10. Explain the conditions under which slaves lived their lives.
11. Examine the development of a distinctive African American culture, and discuss the characteristics of that culture.
12. Examine the attitudes of blacks toward slavery and toward whites, and discuss the extent and nature of black resistance to the institution of slavery.

IDENTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

After studying Chapter 10 of *A People and a Nation*, you should be able to identify *and* explain fully the historical significance of each item listed below.

- Identify each item in the space provided. Give an explanation or description of the item. Answer the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*.
- Explain the historical significance of each item in the space provided. Establish the historical context in which the item exists. Establish the item as the result of or as the cause of other factors existing in the society under study. Answer this question: *What were the political, social, economic, and/or cultural consequences of this item?*

1. the cotton gin
2. the “Cotton South”
3. the American system of manufacturing
4. the pre–Civil War cotton textile industry
5. the “civilizing act” of 1819

6. President James Monroe's removal message of 1824

7. the Cherokee renaissance

8. *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*

9. *Worcester v. Georgia*

10. the Removal Act of 1830

11. the Trail of Tears

12. the Second Seminole War

13. Yeoman farmers

14. landless white Southerners

16. the planter class in the South

17. the domestic slave trade

18. Nat Turner's Insurrection

IDEAS AND DETAILS

Objective 18

1. Treaty negotiations between the United States and Indian groups
 - a. demonstrate the respect the United States had for Indian sovereignty.
 - b. show a desire by the United States to protect the Indians' cultures.
 - c. were ultimately a means by which the United States could acquire more of the Indians' land.
 - d. usually took place in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation.

Objective 18

2. President Monroe's policy toward the Indians called for
 - a. extermination.
 - b. establishing job-training centers for Indians.
 - c. removal of all Indians to the area west of the Mississippi.
 - d. establishing a Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Objective 2

3. Which of the following may be said to have been at the heart of the South's proslavery argument?
 - a. Constitutionalism.
 - b. Paternalism.
 - c. Racism.
 - d. Spiritualism.

Objectives 3 and 7

4. The slave system in the South
 - a. caused a devaluation of free labor
 - b. caused white Southerners to reject completely an aristocratic value system.
 - c. caused the emergence of a relatively large and vocal abolitionist group in the South.
 - d. led to serious and frequent conflicts among southern whites.

Objectives 10 and 12

5. The worst evil of American slavery was the
 - a. physical abuse associated with it
 - b. coercion and loss of freedom associated with one person owning another.
 - c. grueling pace at which slaves worked.
 - d. fact that slaves were regarded as indispensable.

Objectives 10 and 12

6. The typical attitude of slaves toward their masters was one of

- a. trust.
- b. kindness and respect.
- c. gratitude.
- d. antagonism and distrust.

Objective 11

7. Which of the following is true of slave culture?

- a. It contained no remnants of the African past.
- b. It resulted from the melding of elements from both African and European cultures, and gave slaves a sense of racial identity.
- c. It stressed the idea of white superiority.
- d. It emphasized loyalty to the master.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Objective 2

1. Discuss the arguments used by Southerners to defend and justify the institution of slavery.

Objective 2

2. Discuss the constitutional arguments used by the South to defend slavery against political threats and the “scientific”, sociological, and Biblical arguments used to defend and justify slavery against moral threats.

Objective 4

3. Discuss President Monroe’s 1824 Indian removal policy, and describe the process by which it was carried out.

Multiple-Choice Answers

1. c. Correct. Although the United States seemed to recognize Indian independence by following international protocol in negotiating, signing, and ratifying treaties with Indian groups, in fact treaty negotiations were used by the United States to acquire Indian land.

a. No. Although the United States government appeared to accept Indian sovereignty by following international protocol in negotiating, signing, and ratifying treaties with Indian

groups, this was merely a facade.

b. No. Rather than showing a desire to protect Indian culture, the United States government usually showed disdain for that culture.

d. No. Treaty negotiations with Indian groups, supposedly between equal nations, were carried out between victor and vanquished. This coercive atmosphere does not indicate that there was “an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation.”

2. c. Correct. In his 1824 message to Congress, President Monroe advocated the settlement of all Indians to the west of the Mississippi.

a. No. Although General William Tecumseh Sherman often talked of “extermination,” this was not President Monroe’s policy.

b. No. The idea of federally sponsored job-training centers was outside the frame of reference of early nineteenth-century Americans.

d. No. President Monroe’s policy did not call for the creation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He believed that the promise of a home free from white encroachment would be sufficient to win Indian acceptance. (The Bureau of Indian Affairs was not created until 1836.)

3. c. Correct. A common feature running through all proslavery arguments was a “deep and abiding racism”.

a. No. Although some southerners defended slavery by arguing that the 5th Amendment protected the property rights of all Americans, Constitutionalism was not “at the heart” of proslavery arguments.

b. No. Although slaveowners used paternalistic ideology to justify their dominance over slaves, paternalism was not “at the heart” of proslavery arguments.

d. No. Although some people used the Bible to defend slavery, this does not suggest that “spiritualism” was at the heart of proslavery arguments.

4. a. Correct. The existence of slavery in southern society led many whites to view manual labor as being beneath them and as degrading and insulting. As a result, there emerged in the South the concept of the “degradation of labor”. However, northern society was economically based on the concept of free wage labor. This concept gave rise to “the dignity of labor” in the North.

b. No. Discussion of the South’s continued acceptance of the practice of dueling to defend one’s honor is evidence that the southerners did not completely reject an aristocratic value system.

c. No. In the South, slaveowners wielded tremendous power, and they were very successful in using their power to silence critics of slavery.

d. No. Although there were signs of more conflict between slaveholding and nonslaveholding whites on the eve of the Civil War, the fact that southern society was rural, uncrowded and mobile tended to prevent such conflicts from emerging.

5. b. Correct. In commenting on their lives as slaves, former slaves emphasized the tyranny associated with physical cruelty as much as the pain. This evidence is the basis for the conclusion that the worst evil of slavery was in the nature of slavery itself.

a. No. Testimony from slaves indicates that physical abuse was part of slavery. However, the same testimony indicates that slaves considered something other than the pain from this abuse to be the worst evil of American slavery.

c. No. Hard work was central to the slaves' existence, with most working from "sun to sun". However, slaves were often successful at slowing down the working pace.

d. No. The attitude that slaves were expendable was much more prevalent in Latin America than in the U.S.

6. d. Correct. The characteristics associated with slavery (paternalistic owners, unhealthy living conditions, grueling work, physical and mental abuse, and the fact of being owned) bred in slaves an attitude of antagonism and resistance toward their masters.

a. No. The institution of slavery did not lead slaves to trust white people.

b. No. Slaves were considered property, with owners having virtual life and death powers over them. In addition, owners were paternalistic toward their slaves.

c. No. Without a doubt there were times when slaves displayed gratitude toward their masters; however, because of the nature of slavery, it did not engender an **attitude** of gratitude on either side.

7. b. Correct. In choosing those elements of their African past and of their American present that they deemed useful for survival, blacks fashioned their own culture. This African-American culture was distinct and separate from white culture and gave slaves a sense of identity as a people.

a. No. Although the African past faded from memory, remnants of African culture remained a part of African American life, especially in dress and recreation.

c. No. Blacks clearly recognized that whites believed themselves to be a superior people; however, African American culture did not accept this idea.

d. No. In their interaction with whites, slaves often "displayed" a sense of loyalty, which was sometimes genuine, but was often merely a survival technique. Moreover, loyalty to the master was not a part of slave culture, which stressed resistance to slavery and loyalty to fellow slaves.