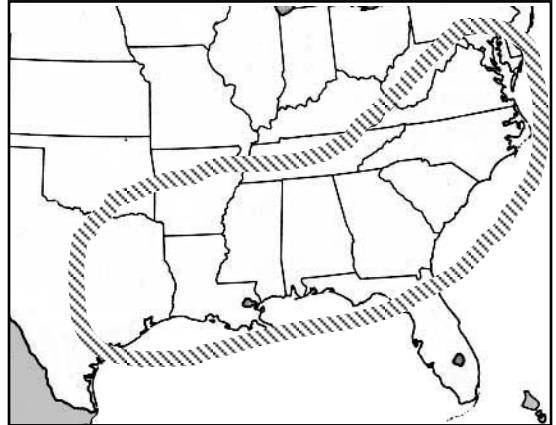


Southern Region, 1800-1850

In 1763, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon surveyed and established the boundary line between the colonies of Maryland and Pennsylvania. This boundary line came to be known as “the Mason-Dixon Line.” It also became an imaginary line separating “the North” from “the South.” In the first half of the 1800s, states lying south of this Mason-Dixon Line along the Atlantic coast were generally considered the “Old South.” The present southern states bordering the Gulf of Mexico (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas) were sometimes called the “New South.” Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Missouri, although later considered “southern,” were then thought of as “western” lands.

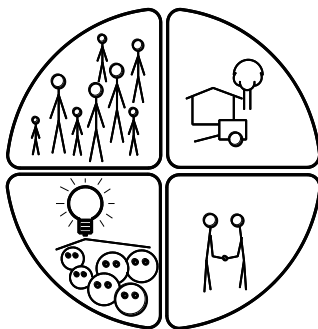


Data in this Part should help you answer the question: How did the experiences shared by people in the South affect their ideas and ways of acting?

Investigation: Interpreting Data for the South

Use the same procedure as with the Part on the Northeast:

Use the Model to analyze each piece of data. You’ll find (or be able to infer) information about:



1. **Setting, both natural and human-made, including such things as transportation methods.**
2. **Demography: Population density and distribution (where do people live?)**
3. **Action patterns: Occupations, child rearing patterns, organizations, social classes, etc.**
4. **Shared ideas about education, religion, status, the future, etc.**

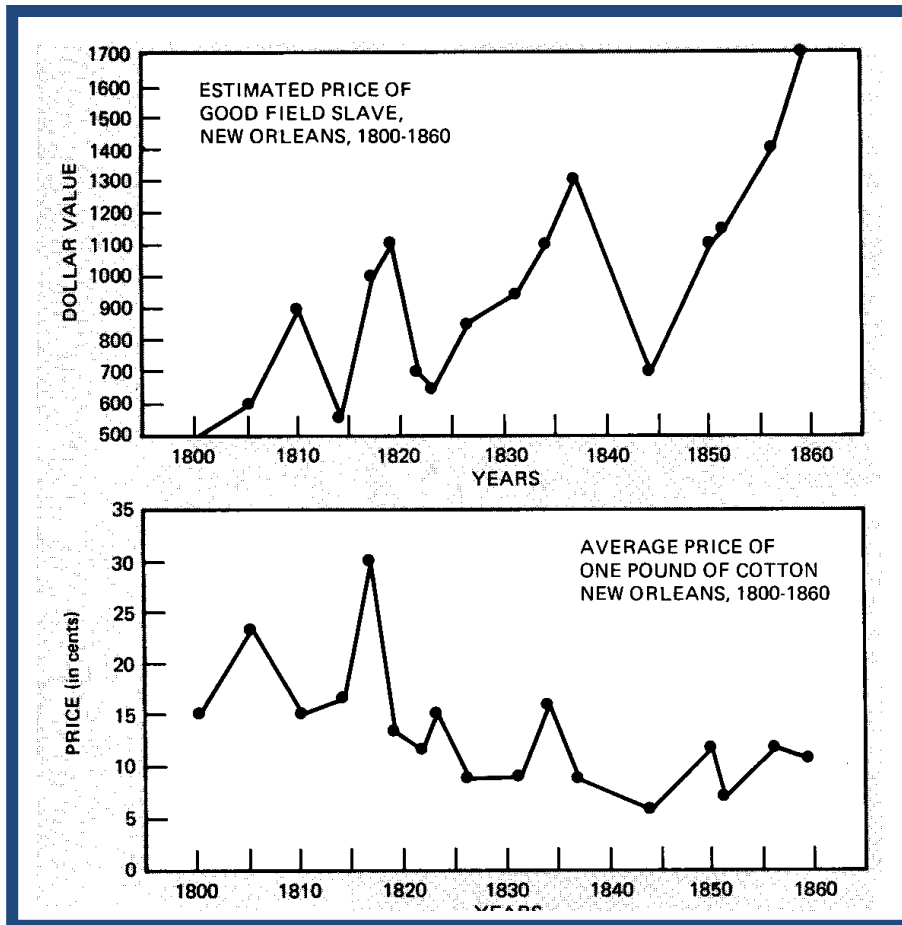
Make notes on the information, which will help you summarize the South when you’ve studied all the material in this activity.

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Robert Russell, an English gentleman and writer for the *London Times*, traveled throughout the South in the 1850s and made these observations.

Traveling through a fertile district in any of the southern states, the appearance of things is very different than that in the Free States. During two days' sail on the Alabama River from Mobile to Montgomery, I did not see enough houses in any one spot to call it a village. There were many places where cotton was shipped and supplies were landed. Still, there were no signs to show that we were in the heart of a rich cotton region. In fact, the more fertile the land, the fewer villages and towns there are. And how can it be any other way? The system of management which is recommended as the most economical and profitable is to raise and to manufacture on the plantations everything which the slaves require. This is seldom accomplished, but a great part of the clothing is homemade. The chief articles imported are bacon and mules from the northern states. The only article sold is cotton, which is taken to the nearest point on a navigable river and shipped out to an agent in an exporting town. The bacon all comes in through the same channel.

Statistics for slavery, 1800-1860:



Estimated Slave Population of the U.S		Bales of Cotton
Year		Produced
1800	895,000	73,000
1810	1,190,000	178,000
1822	1,620,000	438,000
1831	2,050,000	805,000
1844	2,730,000	2,077,000
1851	3,280,000	2,796,000
1859	3,950,000	4,541,000

Joseph H. Ingraham, a young New Englander, toured southwestern Mississippi. His book, *The South-West*, describes what he saw. It was published anonymously in 1835, signed “By a Yankee.”

A plantation well-stocked with workers is the ambition of every man who lives in the South. Young men who come to this country “to make money” soon want this. A broad plantation, waving with snow-white cotton bolls, fills their dreams. This is the reason for the great number of planters and the few professional men. In such a state of things, no men grow old or gray in their profession if they are at all successful. As soon as the young lawyer makes enough to purchase a few hundred acres of rich land and a few slaves, he quits his profession at once, though perhaps just rising into prominence, and turns cotton planter. The legal profession at Natchez is composed entirely of young men. Ten years from now, probably not four out of five of these will still work as lawyers.

Physicians make money much more rapidly than lawyers, so they turn planter even sooner. They, however, keep their titles, so that doctor-planters are now numerous. They far outnumber the regular doctors, who have not yet climbed high enough up the wall to leap down into a cotton field on the other side. Incomes of \$20,000 are common here. Several individuals possess incomes of from \$40,000 to \$50,000 and live in a style equal to their wealth. The amount is generally expressed by the number of their Negroes and the number of “bales” they make at a crop. To sell cotton in order to buy Negroes, to make more cotton to buy more Negroes, etc., is the aim of all the operations of the cotton planter. His whole world is wrapped up in it. The towns and villages of Mississippi, as in European states, are located perfectly independent of each other, isolated among forests, and often many miles apart. In between are large areas of country with no other division except counties. Natchez, for instance, is a town one mile square, but from its boundaries to Woodville, the next incorporated town south, it is 38 miles.

C. C. Clay, Jr., an Alabama legislator, made the following speech to an agricultural club in his state in 1855.

I can show you, with sorrow, in the older portions of Alabama, the sad results of the exhausting culture of cotton. Our small planters, after taking the best off their lands, are unable to restore them with rest, fertilizer, or otherwise. So, they are moving further west and south, in search of other fresh lands which they will also ruin. Our wealthier planters with more money are buying out their poorer neighbors, extending their plantations and adding to their slave force. The wealthy few, who are able to live on smaller profits and give their fields some rest, are thus pushing off many of the small independent planters.

Of the \$20,000,000 annual profit from the sales of the cotton crop of Alabama, nearly all not used to support the producers is reinvested in land and Negroes. Thus, the white population has decreased and the slave population increased. In crossing Madison County, one will discover numerous farmhouses, once the houses of freemen, now occupied by slaves. Others are deserted and run down. One will see fields, once fertile, now unfenced and abandoned. He will see the moss growing on the walls of once-thrifty villages. He will find that "one master grasps the whole domain" that once furnished happy homes for a dozen white families. Indeed, a country where, 50 years ago, hardly a tree had been felled by the axe of the pioneer, is already showing signs of the decay apparent in Virginia and the Carolinas. The freshness of its agricultural glory is gone; the energy of its youth is extinct and the spirit of desolation seems hanging over it.

One of the problems faced by Southern plantations was erosion of the soil. (Erosion can take place when all trees have been cut down and when land has been planted too often. Rain then washes away all of the valuable, rich topsoil.) Frederick Law Olmstead, a northern traveler in the South, reports on the erosion problem in Louisiana in 1854.

During the day I passed four or five large plantations. The hillsides were worn, cracked, and channeled like icebergs; the stables and Negro quarters were all abandoned—everything was given up to nature and decay.

In its natural state, the soil that has never been cultivated appears the richest I have ever seen, the growth upon it from weeds to trees being dense and rich in color. At first the soil is expected to bear a bale and a half of cotton to the acre, making eight or ten bales for each able fieldhand. But the soil's productivity rapidly decreases.

If these slopes were made into permanent terraces, the fertility of the soil might be preserved, even with constant use. In this way the hills would continue for ages to produce annual crops of greater value than those which are now obtained from them at such destructive expense. From ten to twenty crops of cotton turns fields into absolute deserts. But with Negroes at \$1,400 a head and fresh land in Texas at half-a-dollar an acre, nothing of this sort can be thought of.

The following letter was written by Henry Barnard to his sister in New England. Barnard tells about his visit to the Carter plantation in Virginia:

Petersburg, Virginia
March 15, 1833

My Dear Betty,

I think you would delight to visit this region, if only to observe the difference of manners and habits from what you have been accustomed to, and to experience the princely hospitality of the gentle-born families. Now, so that you may understand how we lived there and how one of these large establishments is carried on, I will describe a single day there. I will suppose also that it is a day upon which company is expected.

When you wake in the morning, you are surprised to find that a servant has been in and, without disturbing you, built up a large fire, taken out your clothes and brushed them and done the same with your boots, brought in hot water to shave you, and indeed stands ready to do what you ask. As soon as you are dressed, you walk down into the dining room. At eight o'clock you take your seat at the breakfast table of rich mahogany—each plate standing separate on its own little cloth. Mr. Carter will sit at one end of the table and Mrs. Carter at the other. Mrs. Carter will send you, by two little black boys, as fine a cup of coffee as you ever tasted, or a cup of tea. It is fashionable here to drink a cup of tea after coffee. Mr. Carter has before him a fine cold ham of the real Virginia flavor—this is all the meat you will get in the morning, but the servant will bring you hot muffins and corn batter cakes every two minutes. You will find on the table also, loaf wheat bread, hot and cold, and corn bread.

After breakfast, if visitors wish to ride, horses are ready at their command. If they wish to read, there are books enough in the library. For writing, materials are ready in his room. The Master and Mistress of the house are not expected to entertain visitors till an hour or two before dinner, which is usually at three. If company has been invited to the dinner, they will begin to come about one—ladies in carriages and gentlemen on horseback. After freshening up, the company amuse themselves in the parlor. About a half-hour before dinner, the gentlemen are invited out for a drink. When dinner is ready (and by the way, Mrs. Carter has nothing to do with setting the table; an old family servant, who for 50 years has supervised the matter, does all that), Mr. Carter politely takes a lady by the hand and leads the way into the dining room. They are followed by the rest, each lady led by a gentleman. Mrs. Carter is at one end of the table with a large dish of rich soup and Mr. Carter at the other, with a cut of fine mutton. Scattered round the table, you may choose for yourself: ham, beef, turkey, duck, eggs with greens, etc., etc.; for vegetables—potatoes, beets, hominy. This last you will find always at dinner. It is made of their white corn and beans and is a very fine dish. After you have dined, there circulates a bottle of sparkling champagne. After that, off pass the things and the upper tablecloth, and there is placed on the table 'the dessert, consisting of fine plum pudding, tarts, etc., etc. After this comes ice cream, West India

(Continued)

preserves (peaches preserved in brandy), etc. When you have eaten this, off goes the second tablecloth, and then upon the bare mahogany table are set the figs, raisins, and almonds, and before Mr. Carter are set two or three bottles of wine—Madeira, Port, and a sweet wine for the ladies. After the glasses are all filled, the gentlemen make toasts to the ladies and down goes the wine. After the first and second glass, the ladies retire, and the gentlemen begin to circulate the bottle pretty briskly. The gentlemen may join the ladies as soon as they please. After music and a little chit-chat, the ladies prepare for their ride home.

English traveler Harriet Martineau visited a Southern plantation in 1834 and reported on daily life:

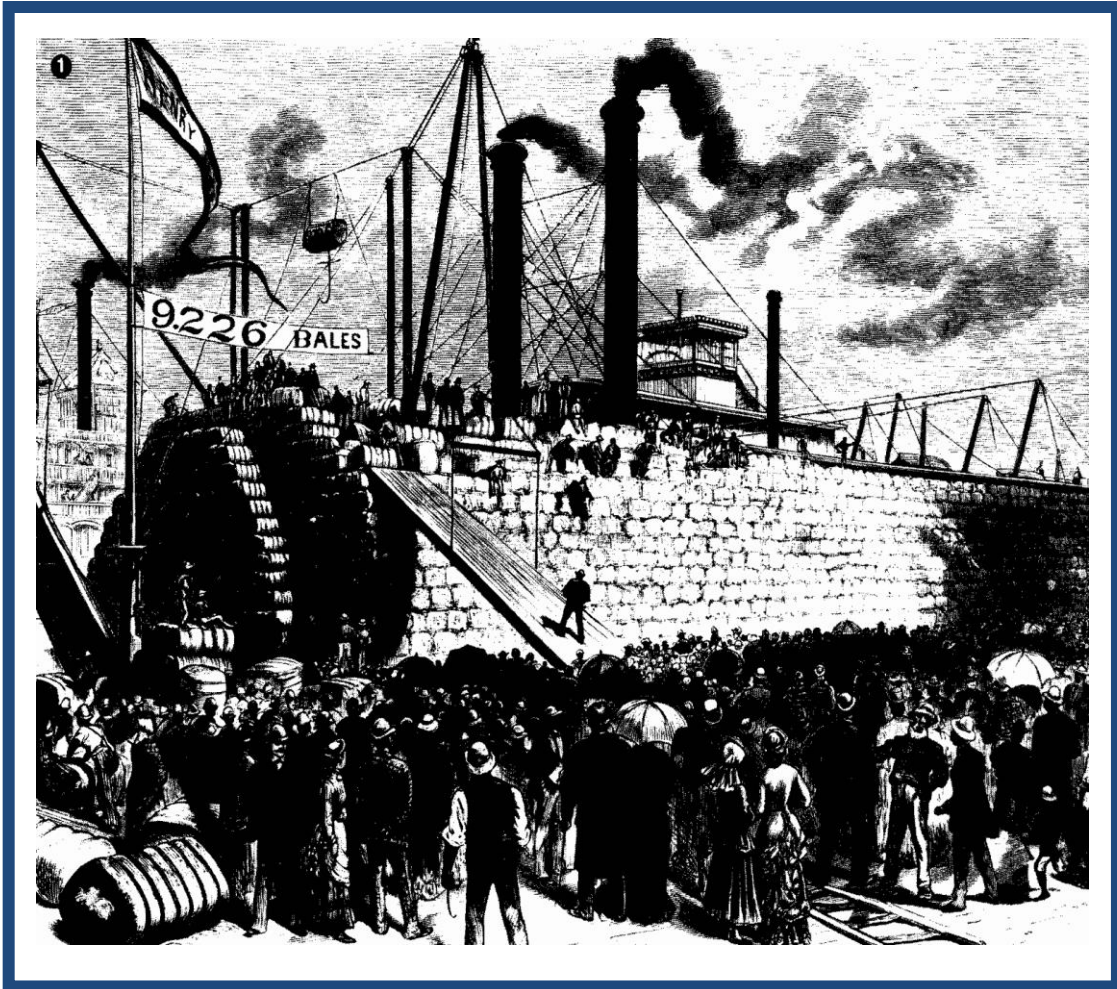
Our settled rural life in the South was various and pleasant enough; all shaded with the presence of slavery, but without any other drawback.

You are awakened in the morning by black women. Perhaps, before you are half dressed, you are summoned to breakfast. You look at your watch, and listen whether it has stopped, for it seems not to be seven o'clock yet. You hurry, however, and find your hostess making the coffee. The young people drop in when the meal is half done, and then it is discovered that breakfast has been served an hour too early. The clock has stopped, and the cook has ordered affairs according to her own guesses about the time. Everybody laughs, and nothing happens.

After breakfast, a farmer in homespun—blue trousers and an orange-brown coat, or all-over gray—comes to speak with your host. A drunken white has shot one of his Negroes, and he fears no punishment can be obtained, because there were no witnesses of the deed but blacks. A consultation is held whether the affair shall go into court. Before the farmer departs, he is offered cake and liqueur.

Your hostess, meantime, has given her orders, and is now busy in a back room, or out on the porch behind the house, cutting out clothes for her slaves; very hard work in warm weather. The young people may pretend to study lessons, and may do more than pretend if they happen to have a tutor or governess. But it is likely that their occupations are as various as their tempers. Rosa cannot be found; she is lying on the bed in her own room reading a novel; Clara is weeping for her canary, which has flown away while she was playing with it; Alfred is trying to find out how soon we may all go out to ride; and the little ones are lounging about outside, with their arms round the necks of blacks their size. You sit down to the piano or to read, and one slave or another enters every half hour to ask what time it is.

The cotton dock at New Orleans:



Frederick Law Olmstead summarized some of his experiences traveling in the South:

I went on my way into the cotton states, within which I traveled over at least three thousand miles of roads. The people living by the side of the road certainly had not been made rich by cotton or anything else. And for every mile of roadside upon which I saw any evidence of cotton production, I am sure that I saw a hundred of forest or wasteland. For every rich man's house, I am sure that I passed a dozen shabby and half-furnished cottages, and at least a hundred cabins that were mere hovels. And I think that for every man of refinement and education with whom I came in contact, there were a score or two who completely lacked the things that in the North would show that a man had begun to acquire money.

Additional information from DeBow:

I believe that, in the South, the non-slaveholders far out-number the slaveholders, perhaps by three to one. In the more Southern portion of this region (“the South-West” of which Mississippi is the center) the non-slaveholders have very little money. The land which they own is generally poor. It is so poor that a small livelihood is all that can be gotten from it. The more fertile soil is in the hands of the slaveholders and will never be available to anyone else. I am sorry to say that I have observed an evident deterioration taking place in this poorer part of the population—the younger portion of it being less educated, less industrious and less worthy of respect than their ancestors.

Slave ownership in 1850:

Demographic Category	All Slave States	Cotton States
1-9 slaves per family	255,258 families	104,956 families
10-49 slaves per family	84,328 families	43,299 families
50+ slaves per family	7,939 families	6,144 families
White Population	6,242,418	2,137,284
Free Black Population	238,187	34,485
Slave Population	3,204,077	1,808,768

Workers in the South, 1840

Agriculture	86.3%
Manufacturing	8.1%
Commerce	1.8%
Learned professions	0.8%
Navigation	0.7%
Mining	0.2%

Investigation: The Slave Experience

The experiences of slaves in the South were far different from those of any other American group, and had powerful effects on their ideas and ways of acting. ***Read the accounts of slave experiences in this activity, and use the model to determine some important ideas and ways of acting. How would slave experiences affect their ideas about the future? About religion? About authority?***

Solomon Northrup was a free African-American man who was kidnapped and held as a slave for 12 years. Here he describes the New Orleans slave auction at which he was sold in 1841:

In the first place we were required to wash, thoroughly, and those with beards were required to shave. We were then given a new suit of clothes, cheap but clean. The men each were given a hat, coat, shirt, pants, and shoes. The women were given dresses of calico and a handkerchief to tie around their heads.

We were then taken to a large room in the front of the building, and told where to stand and how to act.

A planter of Baton Rouge purchased Randall. The little fellow was made to jump and run across the floor and perform many other feats to show his activity and condition. All this time Eliza (his mother) was crying aloud and wringing her hands. She pleaded with the man not to buy him unless he also bought her. She promised to be the most faithful slave that ever lived.

The man answered that he could not afford to buy both of them. Then Eliza burst into total grief, weeping and pleading. The owner of the slave-pen turned round to her savagely and ordered her to stop her noise or she would be whipped. If she didn't stop crying immediately, he would take her to the yard and give her a hundred lashes. Yes, he would take the nonsense out of her!

Eliza shrunk before him and tried to wipe away her tears, but she failed. She wanted to be with her children, she said, the little time she had left. All the threats and frowns of the owner would not stop her. She continued to plead and cry, and ask that she not be separated from her boy.

It did no good. The man could not afford to buy both of them. Randall must go alone. Then Eliza ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him again and again. She told him to remember her—with her tears falling on the boy's face like rain.

“Don't cry, mama. I will be a good boy. Don't cry,” said Randall, looking back as they went out the door.

When he was 90 years old, David Blount recalled his days as a slave:

The master made us work through the week, but on Saturdays we used to go swimming in the river and do a lot of other things we liked to do.

We didn't mind the work so much because the ground was soft as ashes and the master let us stop and rest when we got tired. We planted potatoes on the uplands and corn on the low ground next to the river.

I worked for a while on Cape Fear in North Carolina. Sometimes on hot days when we were cutting fodder, we'd all stop work about three o'clock in the afternoon and go swimming. After we came out of the water we'd work harder than ever. The master was good to us because we worked hard and did what he told us to do.

Usually the master hired good overseers, and lots of times he let slaves oversee, but I remember once when he hired a man who was really mean. He beat some of the half-grown boys until the blood ran down to their heels, and he told the rest of us that if we told on him he would kill us. We didn't dare ask the master to get rid of him, so this went on for a long time.

Solomon Northrup described slaves' work in the cotton fields:

During all the cotton hoeings, the overseer or driver follows the slaves on horseback with a whip. The fastest hoer takes the lead row. He is usually about a rod ahead of the others. If one of them passes him, the lead hoer is whipped. If a hoer falls behind or stops for a moment, he is whipped.

Near the end of August the cotton picking season begins. Each slave is given a long sack to carry, with a strap that goes over his head. Large baskets are placed at the beginning of the rows, each holding about two barrels. The sacks are emptied into the baskets when they are filled.

When a new man—one not used to picking—is sent for the first time into a field, he is whipped frequently and made to pick all day as fast as he possibly can. At night the cotton he has picked is weighed, to find out how much he has picked. He must bring in the same amount each night following. If he falls short, he is given a number of lashes as a penalty.

An ordinary day's work is two hundred pounds. A slave used to picking cotton is punished if he brings in less. The hands must be in the cotton fields as soon as it is light in the morning. Except for ten or fifteen minutes given at noon for them to eat their cold bacon, they are not permitted a minute's rest until it is too dark to see. When the moon is full they often work until the middle of the night. They dare not stop until the overseer gives the order.

(Continued)

Once the day's work is over, the slaves carry the cotton to the gin-house, where it is weighed. No matter how tired the slave is, he comes to the gin-house afraid. If his weight is short, he knows he will be punished. If his weight is ten or twenty pounds over what he usually picks, he will probably be expected to pick that much more cotton the next day. No matter how much he has picked, the slave is afraid. After the cotton is weighed, the slaves who did not pick enough cotton are whipped.

An advertisement for a southern raffle:

3 RAFFLE

Mr. Joseph Jennings respectfully informs his friends and the public that, at the request of many acquaintances, he has been induced to purchase from Mr. Osborne, of Missouri, the celebrated

DARK BAY HORSE, "STAR,"

Aged five years, square trotter and warranted sound; with a new light Trotting Buggy and Harness; also, the dark, stout

MULATTO GIRL, "SARAH,"

Aged about twenty years, general house servant, valued at *nine hundred dollars*, and guaranteed, and

Will be Ruffled for

At 4 o'clock P. M., February first, at the selection hotel of the subscribers. The above is as represented, and those persons who may wish to engage in the usual practice of raffling, will, I assure them, be perfectly satisfied with their destiny in this affair.

The whole is valued at its just worth, fifteen hundred dollars; fifteen hundred

CHANCES AT ONE DOLLAR EACH.

The Raffle will be conducted by gentlemen selected by the interested subscribers present. Five nights will be allowed to complete the Raffle. **BOTH OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED CAN BE SEEN AT MY STORE, No. 78 Common St., second door from Camp, at from 9 o'clock A. M. to 2 P. M.**

Highest throw to take the first choice; the lowest throw the remaining prize, and the fortunate winners will pay twenty dollars each for the refreshments furnished on the occasion.

N. B. No chances recognized unless paid for previous to the commencement.

JOSEPH JENNINGS.

Summarizing Southern Society

1. *Summarize life in the South using information for the four Model categories you have investigated.*
2. *Describe the opinions and attitudes you'd expect a plantation owner in the South to have about:*
 - a. *Slavery*
 - b. *A high tariff on goods manufactured in other countries and sold in the United States*
 - c. *Working as a laborer*
 - d. *Cheap land for sale in Texas*
 - e. *Equality of various kinds and classes of people*
3. *In what ways do you think opinions of non-slave-owning white people were similar to and different from the opinions of slave owners?*
4. *In what important ways did Southern society differ from society in the Northeast?*
5. *Do you think the South, from 1800 to 1850, was the same as it was before 1800? Different?*
6. *Which seemed to have changed more between 1800 and 1850—the South or the Northeast?*

Investigating Environment: The South

Throughout the data you've just studied is information about the natural environment in the South—the land, rivers, climate, etc.

1. *Use atlases and other resources to find out more about the southern environment.*
2. *Trace or draw a simple outline map of the South, showing mountains, navigable rivers, waterpower, farmland, soil quality, harbors, growing season, natural resources, and other information you think affected life in the region.*
3. *In your journal, describe relationships between environment in the South, and the ideas and ways of acting of the people who lived there in the period from 1800 to 1850.*

Follow-Up: The South Today

As you did for the Northeast, gather data for present-day southern states in some or all of the following categories:

- Population density
- Employment distribution (service, trade, government, manufacturing)
- Per capita income
- Educational achievement
- Crime Rate

You'll probably note extensive state-to-state variation. Save your results for comparison with other present-day regions.

Acknowledgements/Sources:

Page 2t: Robert Russell, *North America, Its Agriculture and Climate*. (Edinburgh 1857, Kilwhiss, Adam and Charles Black) **3b:** Joseph H. Ingraham, *The South-West*, 1835. **4t:** DeBow's *Review*, December 1855 **4b:** Frederick Law Olmstead, *The Cotton Kingdom*, 1861. **5, 6t:** *Maryland Historical Magazine*, vol. XIII (Baltimore, Md.: Maryland Historical Society, 1918). **6b:** Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel*, 1838 **7b:** Frederick Law Olmstead, *The Cotton Kingdom*, 1861 **8t:** James D. B. DeBow, *Resources of the South and West*. **8c, b:** *Statistical Abstract*, US. Census, 1840, 1850. **9:** Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 1853 **10t:** Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives*, 1936-1938 Volume XI-North Carolina, p. 110 **10b:** Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 1853.

Notes for teachers and mentors:

This is the second of three units investigating society and culture in the three main regions of the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century. The three provide data for the four primary elements of the Model—environment, demography, action patterns, and shared ideas.

Both in historical and conceptual sequence, these units “fit” after completion of the investigations in Part 7 of *Investigating American History*.

The optimum sequence is “Northeastern Region, 1800-1850” first, then “Southern Region, 1800-1850,” followed by “Western Region, 1800-1850.”

A final unit, “Comparing Regions, 1800-1850,” may be used after Part 8 to enhance and evaluate learners’ understanding of regional differences in society and culture. A grasp of these differences is necessary background to an understanding of the Civil War.