**Chapter 11**

Cotton Slavery and The Old South

*Reviewing Objectives*

**A thorough study of Chapter Eleven should enable the student to understand:**

1. The significance of the shift of economic power from the “upper South” to the lower South.”
2. How cotton became “king,” and the role it played in shaping the “southern way of life.”
3. How trade and industry functioned under the southern agricultural system.
4. The structure of southern society, and the role of an enslaved people in that society.
5. The place of the South, with its increasing reliance on King Cotton, in the nation’s economy.
6. The continuing historical debate over the South, its “peculiar institution,” and the effects of enslavement on the blacks.

**Chapter 11**

**Pertinent Questions**

**The Cotton Economy**

1. What was the “most important economic development in the south in the mid-nineteenth century”? What caused this, and what was its economic impact?

2. What were the agricultural regions in the South, and what crops were grown in them?

3. How did cotton become “King” in the South, and what did this mean for the development of the region?

4. What role did the “business class” of the South play in the region’s economic development? What element was the most important in this group? Why?

5. What do the authors mean by the statement that the antebellum South had a “colonial” economy?

6. What was the “cavalier” image, and how were the southern planters able to create it?

7. Though only as small minority of southern whites owned slaves, the region was seen---both by the outside world and by many southerners themselves---as a society dominated by great plantations and wealthy land owning planters. How did this happen?

8. How did the idea of “honor” affect southern life in the years prior to the Civil War?

9. How was the role played by affluent southern white women like that of their northern counterparts? How was it different?

10. What accounted for the difference identified in question 9? Why did so few southern white women rebel against their role?

11. If “the typical white southern farmer was not a good planter” what was he? Describe and explain the way of life of the southern “plain folk.”

12. Why did so few non-slaveholding whites oppose the slave holding oligarchy? Where did these opponents live?

**Slavery: The “Peculiar Institution”**

13. What were the slave codes? What function did they serve? How were they applied and what resulted from their violation?

14. How was slave life shaped by the slave’s relationship with his or her owner?

15. Explain the “actual material condition of slavery” and the debate over it.

16. Were there “classes” among the slaves? What evidence is there to support this?

17. How did slavery in the cities differ from slavery on the plantation? What effect did urban slavery have on the “peculiar institution” and in the relationship between white and black?

18. How extensive was the practice of manumission in the South? What was the status of the freed slave in the South, and how did this compare with the status of freed people in the north?

19. Explain the characteristics of the foreign and domestic slave trade. On what grounds was this trade criticized, and how did the South answer this criticism?

20. How did the slaves respond to slavery? What evidence is there to suggest that slaves did not accept their condition without a protest and, in some cases, outright defiance?

21. What were the most widely recognized slave revolts? What did they accomplish?

**The Culture of Slavery**

22. Explain how the process of adaptation helped slaves develop their own separate culture. How was this a form of resistance as well?

23. What role did language and music play in sustaining racial pride and unity for slaves?

24. What role did religion play in the lives of slaves? What role did the slave family play?

**Where Historians Disagree**

25. How have historical interpretations of the impact of slavery on the slaves evolved over the years?

26. What factors have shaped these historian’s assessments?

**Patterns of Popular Culture**

27. How did music both shape and reflect the lives of the African Americans on slave plantations?

# Summary

In the 1830s and 1840s, as the societies of the North and South developed, the two diverged, and this had an impact on the growth of the nation. During the period both sections expanded physically and economically; but while the northern economy was characterized by industrial expansion, by the growth of transportation systems (especially railroads), and by an increasingly diverse population, the southern economy continued to rest on staple-crop agriculture and slave labor. This is not to say that the South did not experience many of the same changes felt in the North, but in comparison, the slave states' way of life seemed more rooted in the past than in the future. As the economic power of the region shifted from the "upper" South to the "lower," cotton became "king," and trade and business served this master. In a short period of time a planter class spread across the South, and though planters were a minority, they influenced society and politics far beyond their numbers. During this period the "cavalier" myth was born and the "Southern lady" made her appearance. Though most Southerners could be considered "plain folk," they supported the slaveholding elites and hoped someday to be part of it. All the while slaves worked, endured, resisted, and under the most trying of conditions created a culture that remains an important part of American life.