

Name:
Period:
English 7
Date:

Research Simulation Task

Writing Task:

You have learned about cotton during the time of slavery by reading two articles, “Why Was Cotton King?” and 12 Years a Slave, and viewing the videos clips on Picking Cotton.

In an essay, compare the purposes of the different sources. Then analyze how each source uses explanations, demonstrations, or descriptions to accomplish its purpose. Be sure to write important similarities and differences between the information gained from the video and the information provided in the articles. Support your response with evidence from each source.

1. What are the purposes of the different sources?
2. How does each source use explanations, demonstrations, or descriptions to accomplish its purpose?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the information gained from the sources?

Text 1:

Why Was Cotton ‘King’?

by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

The most commonly used phrase describing the growth of the American economy in the 1830s and 1840s was “Cotton Is King.” We think of this slogan today as describing the plantation economy of the slavery states in the Deep South, which led to the creation of “the second Middle Passage.” But it is important to understand that this was not simply a Southern phenomenon. Cotton was one of the world’s first luxury commodities, after sugar and tobacco, and was also the commodity whose production most dramatically turned millions of black human beings in the United States themselves into commodities. Cotton became the first mass consumer commodity.

Understanding both how extraordinarily profitable cotton was and how interconnected and overlapping were the economies of the cotton plantation, the Northern banking industry, New England textile factories

and a huge proportion of the economy of Great Britain helps us to understand why it was something of a miracle that slavery was finally abolished in this country at all.

Let me try to break this down quickly, since it is so fascinating:

Let's start with the value of the slave population. Steven Deyle shows that in 1860, the value of the slaves was "roughly three times greater than the total amount invested in banks," and it was "equal to about seven times the total value of all currency in circulation in the country, three times the value of the entire livestock population, twelve times the value of the entire U.S. cotton crop and forty-eight times the total expenditure of the federal government that year." As mentioned here in a previous column, the invention of the cotton gin greatly increased the productivity of cotton harvesting by slaves. This resulted in dramatically higher profits for planters, which in turn led to a seemingly insatiable increase in the demand for more slaves, in a savage, brutal and vicious cycle.

Now, the value of cotton: Slave-produced cotton "brought commercial ascendancy to New York City, was the driving force for territorial expansion in the Old Southwest and fostered trade between Europe and the United States," according to Gene Dattel. In fact, cotton productivity, no doubt due to the sharecropping system that replaced slavery, remained central to the American economy for a very long time: "Cotton was the leading American export from 1803 to 1937."

What did cotton production and slavery have to do with Great Britain? The figures are astonishing. As Dattel explains: "Britain, the most powerful nation in the world, relied on slave-produced American cotton for over 80 per cent of its essential industrial raw material. English textile mills accounted for 40 percent of Britain's exports. One-fifth of Britain's twenty-two million people were directly or indirectly involved with cotton textiles."

And, finally, New England? As Ronald Bailey shows, cotton fed the textile revolution in the United States. "In 1860, for example, New England had 52 percent of the manufacturing establishments and 75 percent of the 5.14 million spindles in operation," he explains. The same goes for looms. In fact, Massachusetts "alone had 30 percent of all spindles, and Rhode Island another 18 percent." Most impressively of all, "New England mills consumed 283.7 million pounds of cotton, or 67 percent of the 422.6 million pounds of cotton used by U.S. mills in 1860." In other words, on the eve of the Civil War, New England's economy, so fundamentally dependent upon the textile industry, was inextricably intertwined, as Bailey puts it, "to the labor of black people working as slaves in the U.S. South."

If there was one ultimate cause of the Civil War, it was King Cotton — black-slave-grown cotton — "the most important determinant of American history in the nineteenth century," Dattel concludes. "Cotton prolonged America's most serious social tragedy, slavery, and slave-produced cotton caused the American Civil War." And that is why it was something of a miracle that even the New England states joined the war to end slavery.

Once we understand the paramount economic importance of cotton to the economies of the United States and Great Britain, we can begin to appreciate the enormity of the achievements of the black and white abolitionists who managed to marshal moral support for the abolition of slavery, as well as those half a million slaves who "marched with their feet" and fled to Union lines as soon as they could following the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Text 2: Slavery on a Cotton Plantation, 1845

By Solomon Northup,

From the story, Twelve Years a Slave

In the latter part of August begins the cotton picking season. At this time each slave is presented with a sack. A strap is fastened to it, which goes over the neck, holding the mouth of the sack breast high, while the bottom reaches nearly to the ground. Each one is also presented with a large basket that will hold about two barrels. This to put the cotton in when the sack is filled. The baskets are carried to the field and placed at the beginning of the rows.

When a new hand, one unaccustomed to the business, is sent for the first time into the field, he is whipped up smartly, and made for that day to pick as fast as he can possibly. At night it is weighed, so that his capability in cotton picking is known. He must bring in the same weight each night following. If it falls short, it is considered that he has been laggard, and a greater or less number of lashes is the penalty.

An ordinary day's work is two hundred pounds. A slave who is accustomed to picking, is punished, if he or she brings in a less quantity than that. There is a great difference among them as regards this kind of labor. Some of them seem to have a natural knack, or quickness, which enables them to pick with great celerity, and with both hands, while others, with whatever practice or industry, are utterly unable to come up to the ordinary standard. Such hands are taken from the cotton field and employed in other business. . .

The cotton grows from five to seven feet high, each stalk having a great many branches, shooting out in all directions, and lapping each other above the water furrow.

There are few sights more pleasant to the eye, than a wide cotton field when it is in bloom. It presents an appearance of purity, like an immaculate expanse of light, new-fallen snow.

Sometimes the slave picks down one side of a row, and back upon the other, but more usually, there is one on either side, gathering all that has blossomed, leaving the unopened bolls for a succeeding picking. When the sack is filled, it is emptied into the basket and trodden down. It is necessary to be extremely careful the first time going through the field, in order not to break the branches off the stalks. The cotton will not bloom upon a broken branch. Epps never failed to inflict the severest chastisement on the unlucky servant who, either carelessly or unavoidably, was guilty in the least degree in this respect.

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; 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 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. Most frequently they have too little, and therefore it is they are not anxious to leave the field. After weighing, follow the whippings; and then the baskets are carried to the cotton house, and their

contents stored away like hay, all hands being sent in to tramp it down. If the cotton is not dry, instead of taking it to the gin-house at once, it is laid upon platforms, two feet high, and some three times as wide, covered with boards or plank, with narrow walks running between them.

This done, the labor of the day is not yet ended, by any means. Each one must then attend to his respective chores. One feeds the mules, another the swine; another cuts the wood, and so forth; besides, the packing is all done by candle light. Finally, at a late hour, they reach the quarters, sleepy and overcome with the long day's toil. Then a fire must be kindled in the cabin, the corn ground in a small hand-mill, and supper, and dinner for the next day in the field, prepared. All that is allowed them is corn and bacon, which is given out at the corncrib and smoke-house ever Sunday morning. Each one receives, as his weekly allowance, three and a half pounds of bacon, and corn enough to make a peck of meal. That is all; no tea, coffee, sugar, and with the exception of a very scanty sprinkling now and then, no salt. . . .

The softest couches in the world are not to be found in the log mansion of the slave. The one whereon I reclined year after year, was a plank twelve inches wide and ten feet long. My pillow was a stick of wood. The bedding was a coarse blanket, and not a rag or shred beside. Moss might be used, were it not that it directly breeds a swarm of fleas.

The cabin is constructed of logs, without floor or window. The latter is altogether unnecessary, the crevices between the logs admitting sufficient light. In stormy weather the rain drives through them, rendering it comfortless and extremely disagreeable. The rude door hangs on great wooden hinges. In one end is constructed an awkward fire-place.

An hour before day light the horn is blown. Then the slaves arouse, prepare their breakfast, fill a gourd with water, in another deposit their dinner of cold bacon and corn cake, and hurry to the field again. It is an offence invariable followed by flogging, to be found at the quarters after day-break. Then the fears and labors of another day begin; and until its close there is no such thing as rest. He fears he will be caught lagging through the day; he fears to approach the gin-house with his basket-load of cotton at night; he fears, when he lies down, that he will oversleep himself in the morning. Such is a true, faithful, unexaggerated picture and description of the slave's daily life, during the time of cotton-picking, on the shores of Bayou Boeuf.

Videos

[Picking Cotton](#)

[Picking Cotton 2](#)

[Picking Cotton 3](#)

	Text 1	Text 2	Videos
Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cotton is king; cotton was important to the US economy - slaves picked cotton in the south - NYC bought and sold cotton - New England used cotton in their textile mills - Great Britain used cotton in 80% of their industry <p>Purpose: Show how important cotton was to the US economy. Show how everyone was responsible for slavery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - day in the life of a cotton picking slave - they were controlled by fear - pick a certain amount of cotton (200 lbs) - worked all day and sometimes during the night - only ate corn and bacon - living quarters were horrible <p>Purpose: Show the physical conditions of a slave who picks cotton. Show the fear that slaves had.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one video was a how-to on hand picking cotton - scale of cotton fields - physical toll on the old cotton picker - the imagery of picking cotton (bending over for long periods of time) <p>Purpose: Show how to pick cotton. Show the physical effects of picking cotton.</p>
Key Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - historical document - no characters - focus on cotton's impact - lots of facts and statistics - why the civil war began 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - POV is from a slave perspective - focuses on the daily life of a slave - talks about the fears of slaves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actual footage of cotton fields and cotton picking - Interviews - Filmmaker's POV - instructional

Mr. Chiang
Period 1-2
English 7
3/17/15

Cotton and Slavery

The article, “Why Cotton was King” and the passage, “Slavery on a Cotton Plantation,” along with the Youtube video clips show the reader another important topic about slavery, cotton. Each source has a specific purpose in describing cotton and slavery. In text 1, the purpose was to show the link between cotton and slavery all over the United States. In text 2, the purpose was to show the life of a slave picking cotton. The videos were meant to instruct the reader on how to pick cotton.

To commence, there are several similarities between the purposes of the sources. All three sources discuss how slavery and cotton are related. In text 1, the author, Henry Louis Gates, tells that slavery was “not just a Southern phenomenon.” In fact, “slave-picked cotton brought commercial ascendancy to New York City.” In text 2, the author, Solomon Northup, writes about these same slaves who are picking the cotton that will later end up in New York and elsewhere. Finally, in the videos, the purpose was to educate viewers on how slaves picked cotton. This all means that the slaves who picked cotton, were important to everyone in the United States. Each source has their own piece of the puzzle.

Despite the similarities, there are a myriad of differences between the sources. For example, in text 2, the POV is from a slave. The writer explains how a slave had to pick “200 pounds” in an ordinary day. Northup explains that a slave was in constant fear. He “feared approaching the gin-house at night.” He “feared oversleeping in the morning.” He “feared

lagging during the day.” Text 1 and the videos do not discuss the daily life of a slave. Text 1 focuses on the economy of cotton. It talks of New England’s textile mills and Great Britain’s industry. The videos, show the viewer neither the life of a slave nor the economy of cotton, but rather how to pick cotton and example of what it looks like. All three sources discuss similar topics, but have completely different POVs and purposes.

All three sources have differing purposes on cotton and slavery. Text 1 is about the economy of cotton. Text 2 shows the daily life of a cotton slave. And the videos show how to pick cotton and they provide examples of what that looks like. This topic is important to write about because it shows that not only were Southerners responsible for the horrible conditions of slaves, but everyone who used, bought, and sold cotton were also responsible. We must all confront our past with complete honesty.

Mr. Chiang

Period 2-3

English 7

3/17/15

The Bridge Between Cotton and Slavery

In “Why was Cotton King?” and the passage “Slavery on a Cotton Plantation,” along with the various Youtube clips, the main topics discussed are slavery and cotton. Each of the sources have a purpose in explaining cotton and slavery. In the first text, the main purpose is to show the reader how slave-produced cotton was connected to the rest of the country. In text 2, the main purpose is to show readers the life of a slave picking cotton. Finally, the video clips are meant to instruct the viewers on the specifics of hand-picking cotton.

To commence, there are some similarities between the purposes of all three sources. All three sources are trying to shed light on the topic of slavery and cotton. For example, in Henry Louis Gates’ article, he explains how slavery contributed to the economy of the United States through cotton. In the Solomon Northup passage, the author sheds light on the slave who picked the cotton. Finally, in the various videos, the viewers learn about how cotton actually was picked. In all three sources, we learn that cotton-picking slaves had difficult lives. In text 1, we infer that slaves had to pick massive amount of cotton. We learn that “422.6 million lbs of cotton were picked in the US in 1860.” All of this was slave-picked. In text 2, we learn that slaves were required to pick “200 lbs in an ordinary day.” These facts connect the first two texts. Finally, in

the videos, we learn just how difficult and tedious picking 1 piece of cotton can be when they demonstrate it.

Despite these similarities, all three sources have glaring differences. In the Gates' piece, there is no mention of a slave's personal difficulties. Its focus is on the interconnectedness and economy of the cotton industry. Text 1 writes about New England's textile industry, NYC's growth, and Great Britain's cotton industry. In contrast, the second passage never discusses about what happens to cotton once its gone from the plantation. Instead, text 2 goes into great detail about the minutia of slave life on a cotton plantation. Text 2 focuses on the daily fear of flogging throughout the entire day. Northup mentions the word "fear" appears four times in the final paragraph. The videos focus on instruction. They are kind of like how-to manuals on how to pick cotton.

Each text has a different purpose on slavery and cotton. The first focuses on economy, the second focuses on the slave's daily life, and the final source focuses on how to hand pick cotton. This topic is important to study because it shows how people suffered for the sake of profit and that many were responsible.

Mr. Chiang
Period 6-7
English 7
3/17/15

The Link Between Cotton and Slavery

In Henry Louis Gates' article, "Why was Cotton King?" and Solomon Northup's passage, "Slavery on a Cotton Plantation, 1845," along with the various Youtube clips, we learn about the bridge between slavery and cotton. The three sources all have purposes of their own with similarities and differences. In text 1, the main purpose of the article is to show how cotton picked by slaves played a major role in the US economy. The second text, shows what the daily life of a slave on a cotton field was like. The final group of videos show how cotton is hand-picked and also the effects of hand picking cotton.

To commence, there are some common topics and ideas within each of the sources. In text 1, Gates writes that cotton was a major economic force in the US. All this cotton came from the backs of slaves in the South. For example, he researches that "422.6 million pounds of cotton used by US mills in 1860" came from the South. When we combine the fact that slaves picked all the cotton in the US with this astronomical number, we realize just how back-breaking this work truly was. In the second text, likewise, the reader sees how these same slaves picked cotton on a daily basis. Text 1 focuses on yearly cotton output, while text 2 focuses on a similar idea but on a daily basis. According to Northup, "An ordinary day's work is two hundred pounds," and "if it falls short...a greater or less number of lashes is the penalty." In the videos, the viewers see how tedious picking even a single cotton boll can be. All three sources show how difficult slavery was, just at different levels.

Despite the similarities, the differences between the sources are glaring. The first major difference between the sources is the point of view. Text 1 does not have a narrator, nor does it tell a story. It is an article filled with facts, statistics, and numbers. It uses evidence like "Britain...relied on slave-produced American cotton for over 80 percent of its essential industrial raw material" to prove its purpose. In text 2, the point of view is told through third person POV with the focus on the slave. The passage delves into the minutia of daily slave life. An example of this would be when Northup explains how the slaves worked all day and were only given a "ten or fifteen minute" break to eat their "cold bacon." The

videos' POV varies between the filmmakers. It seems that the videos were meant to instruct instead of narrate.

Each source has a specific purpose and there are similarities and differences between them all. They are all similar in that the slaves produced enormous amounts of cotton which was back-breaking work, down to the single cotton boll. They differ in their approach, as specifically in their POV. This topic is worthy of writing because we need to understand that many more were responsible for slavery and its abomination due to the impact of cotton.

Mr. Chiang

Period 7-8

English 7

3/17/15

Cotton and Slavery

In Henry Louis Gates' article, "Why was Cotton King?" and Solomon Northup's passage, "Slavery on a Cotton Plantation, 1845," along with the Youtube videos, the main topics are slavery and cotton. There are several similarities and differences between the purposes of the sources. In text 1, the main purpose was the link between cotton and slavery. In text 2, the main purpose was the daily life of a cotton-picker. The videos are meant to show how to hand-pick cotton and the effects of picking cotton.

To begin, there are some similarities between the three sources. All three sources touch upon the bond between slavery and cotton. In text 1, we learn that the cotton that slaves picked, ended up in the North and in Great Britain. For example, "New England consumed 283.7 million lbs of cotton in 1860." All this cotton, all 283.7 million lbs of it, came from American slaves. In text 2, we zoom into a cotton plantation and see how a slave picks cotton. We learn that slaves on "an ordinary day's work," picked 200 lbs of cotton. Finally, in the videos we see how a single boll of cotton is picked. All three sources show how difficult slaves' work was. One can only imagine how much suffering occurred in order to pick 283.7 million pounds in a year.

Despite the similarities, there are some major differences between the sources. The first major difference is what the source is trying to accomplish. The first text tries to explain how important cotton was to the economy of the US. It uses several facts and statistics to prove its point like "Cotton was the leading export between 1803 to 1937." The second text is more like a narrative that shows all the little details of a slave's life on a cotton plantation. An example of this would be when text 2 explains about weighing the cotton after the day's work, and the fear slaves would have to make the correct weight. The videos are instructional. They try to visually show how one would hand-pick cotton. All three sources have very different goals.

There are many differences and similarities between the purposes of the sources. They are similar in that they all show a link between slavery and cotton. They are different in that their goals are different. This is important to study because cotton played an important role in American slavery and many more people were responsible than originally thought.

