

OUTLINE

Chapter 11 The Peculiar Institution

This chapter examines the institution of slavery as it developed in the years after the American Revolution. The focus is on how slavery shaped both white and black society in the American South.

INTRODUCTION

I. THE OLD SOUTH

II. LIFE UNDER SLAVERY

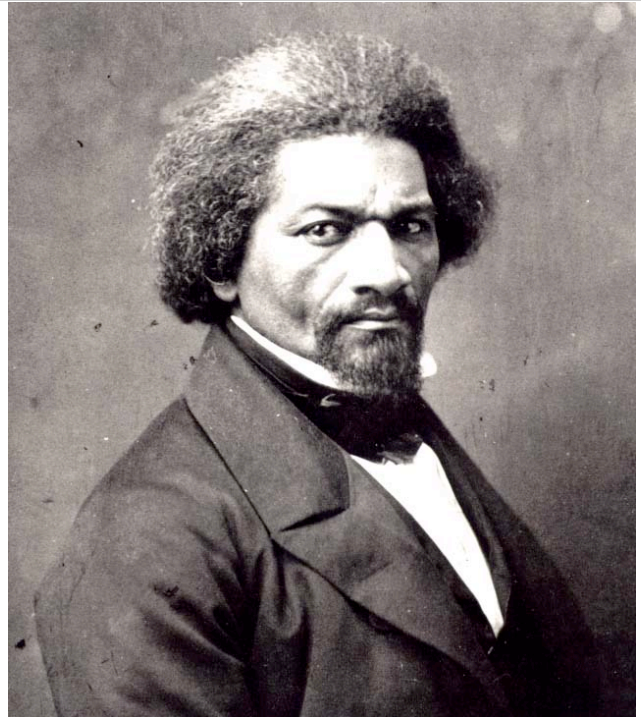
III. SLAVE CULTURE

IV. RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY

INTRODUCTION

STORY:

Frederick Douglass was born a slave but ran away to become one of the most articulate and determined opponents of slavery in America. He worked with abolitionists to spread the word against slavery and during the Civil War he urged President Lincoln to emancipate the slaves. According to Professor Foner, Douglass believed that slaves, who struggled daily against the most difficult odds for freedom, “were truer to the nation’s underlying principles than the white Americans” who accepted slavery’s continued existence.



THEMES:

1. The rise of cash-crop cotton agriculture in the South increased the region’s reliance on slavery.
2. White southern society was dominated by the institution of slavery even though most whites did not own slaves.
3. White southerners believed that slavery was consistent with the ideals of liberty founded during the Revolution.
4. Slaves developed a distinct African-American culture in the South.
5. Slaves consistently resisted bondage through a variety of means.

I. THE OLD SOUTH

FOCUS QUESTION: How did slavery shape social and economic relations in the Old South?

A. Cotton is King

1. Strength of slavery rested on cotton
2. Cotton industry
 - a. Three-fourths of the world's cotton supply came from southern United States
 - b. Cotton supplied textile mills in the North and Great Britain
 - c. Cotton represented America's biggest export

B. Slavery and the Nation

1. The North was not immune to slavery
 - a. Northern merchants and manufactures participated in the slave economy and shared in its profits
 - b. Slavery shaped the lives of all Americans
2. Southern economic growth was different from that in the North
 - a. There were few large cities in the South
 - b. The cities were centers for gathering and shipping cotton
 - c. The region produced less than 10 percent



STUDY HINT

You should be able to identify the ways in which slavery influenced the economy of the North as well as the economy of the South.

of the nation's manufactured goods

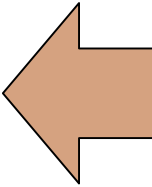
C. Plain Folk of the Old South

1. Three out of four white southerners did not own slaves
2. Most white southerners lived on self-sufficient farms in isolated areas and were poorly educated
3. Most supported slavery
 - a. A few, like Andrew Johnson and Joseph Brown, spoke out against the planter elite
 - b. Most white southerners supported the planter elite and slavery because of shared bonds of regional loyalty, racism, and kinship ties

D. The Planter Class

1. In 1850, the majority of slaveholding families owned five or fewer slaves
2. Fewer than 2,000 families owned 100 slaves or more
3. Ownership of slaves provided the route to wealth, status, and influence
4. Slavery was a profit-making system
 - a. Men watched the world market for cotton, invested in infrastructure, and managed their plantations
 - b. Plantation mistresses cared for sick slaves, oversaw the domestic servants, and

STUDY HINT



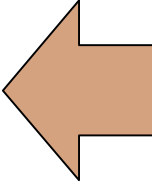
You should be able to explain why non-slave owning whites in the South supported the institution of slavery.

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Planter class

STUDY HINT



You should be able to describe life for women and men in the planter class.

supervised the plantation when the master was away

5. Southern slaveowners spent much of their money on material goods

E. The Paternalist Ethos

1. Southern slaveowners were committed to a hierarchical, agrarian society
2. Paternalism was ingrained in slave society
3. Southern men often dueled as part of a code of honor
4. Southern women were often trapped in a “domestic circle” of loneliness

F. The Proslavery Argument

1. Fewer and fewer southerners believed that slavery was a necessary evil
2. Proslavery argument rested on a number of pillars, including a commitment to white supremacy, biblical sanction of slavery, and historical precedent in that slavery was essential to human progress
3. Another proslavery argument held that slavery guaranteed equality for whites

G. Slavery and Liberty

1. White southerners declared themselves the true heirs of the American Revolution
2. Proslavery arguments began to repudiate the ideas in the Declaration of Independence

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**Paternalism
Paternalist
ethos**

STUDY HINT

You should be able to describe the arguments that white Southerners used to defend slavery.

Give special attention to how the ideas of liberty established during the Revolution were used in the pro-slavery argument.

that equality and freedom were universal entitlements

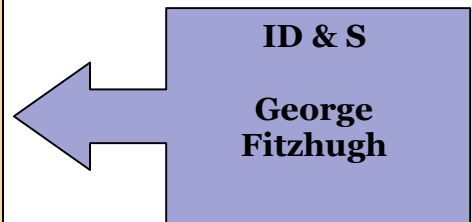
a. John C. Calhoun believed that the language in the Declaration of Independence was indeed dangerous

3. Southern clergymen argued that submission of inferior to superior was a “fundamental law”

4. George Fitzhugh, a Virginia writer, argued that “universal liberty” was the exception, not the rule, and that slaves, because they were not burdened with financial concerns, were the happiest and freest people in the world

5. Abraham Lincoln observed that the proslavery arguments were functioning to serve only the interests of slave owners, who reaped the greatest benefit from the institution

6. By 1830, southerners defended slavery in terms of liberty and freedom—without slavery, freedom was not possible



II. LIFE UNDER SLAVERY

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the material and legal conditions in which slaves lived and worked?

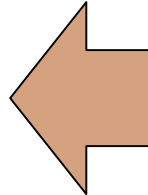
A. Slaves and the Law

1. Slaves were considered property and had few legal rights
2. Slaves were not allowed to testify against a white person, carry a firearm, leave the plantation without permission, learn how to read or write, or gather in a group without a white person present, although some of these laws were not always vigorously enforced
3. Masters also controlled whether a slave married and how they spent their free time
4. Celia killed her master while resisting a sexual assault
 - a. Celia was charged with murder and sentenced to die, but she was pregnant and her execution was delayed until she gave birth, so as not to deny the master his property right
5. Some laws protected slaves against mistreatment
 - a. American slaves as compared to their counterparts in the West Indies and Brazil enjoyed better diets, lower infant mortality, and longer life expectancies
 - b. Reasons for the above include the



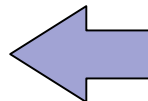
STUDY HINT

You should be able to describe some of the basic laws relating to what slaves could not do and what slave owners could do.



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Celia



“paternalistic” ethos of the South, the lack of malaria and yellow fever in the South, and the high costs of slaves

6. Improvements in the slaves’ living conditions were meant to strengthen slavery, not undermine it

B. Free Blacks and the Old South

1. By 1860, there were nearly a half million free blacks in the United States and most of them lived in the South

2. Free blacks were not all that free

a. Free blacks were allowed by law to own property, marry, and could not be bought or sold

b. Free blacks were not allowed by law to own a firearm, dog, or liquor. They could not testify in court or serve on a jury. They could not strike a white person, even in self-defense

3. Unlike in Brazil or the West Indies, free blacks in the Old South enjoyed little respect or prosperity, with only a few exceptions

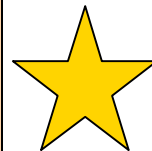
4. The majority of free blacks who lived in the Lower South resided in cities like New Orleans and Charleston, while those living in the Upper South generally lived in rural areas, working for wages as farm laborers

C. Slave Labor

1. Labor occupied most of a slave’s daily existence

STUDY HINT

You should be able to describe what conditions were like for free blacks in the South.



2. There were many types of jobs a slave might perform: cutting wood for fuel for steamboats, working in mines, working on docks in seaports, laying railroad track, repairing bridges or roads, and working as skilled artisans

D. Gang Labor and Task Labor

1. Most slaves worked in the fields
 - a. It is estimated that 75 percent of the women and 90 percent of the men worked as field hands
2. On large plantations they worked in “gangs” under the direction of the overseer, a man who was generally considered cruel by the slaves

E. Slavery in the Cities

1. Most city slaves were servants, cooks, and other domestics
2. Some city slaves were skilled artisans and occasionally lived on their own

F. Maintaining Order

1. The system of maintaining order rested on force
2. There were many tools a master had to maintain order, including whipping, exploiting divisions among slaves, incentives, and the threat of sale

STUDY HINT

You should know the difference between the gang labor system and the task labor system.



III. SLAVE CULTURE

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the foundations of the culture the slaves themselves forged?

A. The Slavery Family

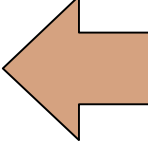
1. Despite the threat of sale and the fact that marriage was illegal between slaves, many slaves did marry and created families
2. Slave traders gave little attention to preserving family ties
3. Traditional gender roles were not followed in the fields, but during their own time, slaves did fall back on traditional gender roles
4. The family was vital to the carrying down of traditions from parent to child

B. Slave Religion

1. Black Christianity was distinctive and offered hope to the slaves
 - a. Almost every plantation had its own black preacher
 - b. Slaves worshipped in biracial churches
 - c. Free blacks established their own churches
2. Masters viewed Christianity as another means of social control, requiring slaves to attend services conducted by white ministers

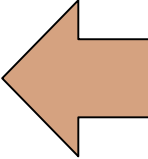


STUDY HINT



You should be able to describe the distinctive features of family life under slavery.

STUDY HINT



You should be able to describe the distinctive features of religious practice under slavery.

3. Many biblical stories offered hope and solace to slaves, including Exodus, David and Goliath, and Jonah and the whale

C. The Desire for Freedom

1. Slave culture rested on a sense of the unjustness of bondage and the desire for freedom

2. Slave folklore glorified the weak over the strong and their spirituals emphasized eventual liberation

3. All slaves saw the injustice of slavery—the hypocrisy of the Declaration of Independence and rhetoric of liberty heard around them only strengthened their desire for freedom



IV. RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the major forms of resistance to slavery?

A. Forms of Resistance

1. The most common form of resistance was “silent sabotage”— breaking tools, feigning illness, doing poor work
2. Less common, but more serious forms of resistance included poisoning the master, arson, and armed assaults

B. Fugitive Slaves

1. Slaves had to follow the North Star as their guide
2. Of the estimated 1,000 slaves a year to escape, most left from the Upper South
3. In the Deep South, fugitive slaves often escaped to the southern cities, to blend in with the free black population
4. The Underground Railroad was a loose organization of abolitionists who helped slaves escape
 - a. Harriet Tubman was an escaped slave who made twenty trips to Maryland, leading slaves to freedom
5. In 1839, a group of slaves collectively seized their freedom while on board the Amistad

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Silent sabotage

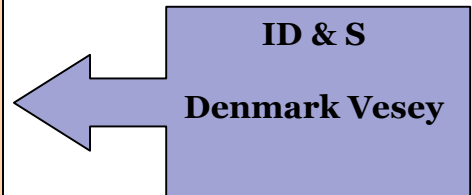
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Underground Railroad

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Harriet Tubman

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Amistad slave revolt

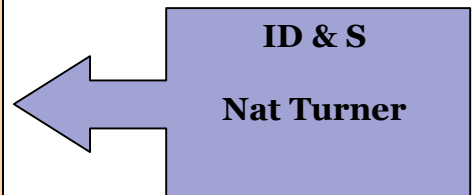
C. Slave Revolts

1. 1811 witnessed an uprising on sugar plantations in Louisiana, which saw slaves marching towards New Orleans before militia captured them
2. In 1822, Denmark Vesey was charged with conspiracy and executed in South Carolina
 - a. Vesey was a religious man who believed the Bible condemned slavery and who saw the hypocrisy of the Declaration of Independence
 - b. The conspiracy was uncovered before Vesey could act



D. Nat Turner's Rebellion

1. In 1831, Nat Turner and his followers marched through Virginia, attacking white farm families
 - a. Eighty slaves had joined Turner and sixty whites had been killed (mostly women and children), before militia put down the rebellion
 - b. Turner was captured and executed
2. Turner's was the last large-scale rebellion in the South
3. Turner's rebellion sent shock waves through the South
 - a. Virginia discussed emancipating its slaves, but failed to get enough votes in the House



b. Instead of offering freedom, Virginia tightened its grip on slavery through new laws further limiting slaves' rights

4. 1831 marked a turning point for the Old South as the white southerners closed ranks and prepared to defend slavery to the end

