
Historical Textiles & Carding Cotton

Social Studies Standards

Kindergarten - Yellow
1st Grade - Orange
2nd Grade - Green
3rd Grade - Light Blue
4th Grade - Red
5th Grade - Purple
Arkansas History - Grey

E.1.K.1 Discuss needs and wants and how they are restricted by limited resources.

G.1.K.5 Discuss cultural characteristics among families and in the community such as art, celebrations, food, language, music, and traditions.

G.1.K.6 Identify the influence of weather and climate on people's daily lives.

H.1.K.3 Compare the life of a student today (present) to the life of a student in the past using visual representations (e.g., growing food, rules and laws, making clothing, transportation, communication).

H.1.K.7 Describe materials and methods that allow people to learn about the past (e.g., photos, artifacts, diaries, oral history, stories)

G.1.1.5 Discuss how cultural characteristics contribute to diversity in a community, place, or region.

G.1.1.6 Describe the influence of weather, climate, and physical characteristics on people's daily lives.

G.1.1.7 Explain ways people utilize natural resources such as timber, minerals, oil, coal, and natural gas in their community.

H.1.1.1 Explain similarities and differences of everyday life in different times using chronological terms.

H.1.1.3 Compare present day families, objects, and events with those in the past using visual representations, news stories, and artifacts (e.g., daily life tasks, food, clothing, transportation, communication, recreation).

H.1.1.7 Draw conclusions about life in the past using historical records and artifacts (e.g., photos, diaries, oral history).

G.1.2.6 Explain the influence of weather, climate, and physical characteristics on people's daily lives in a place or region.

H.1.2.3 Compare life in a community past and present using maps, photographs, news stories, artifacts, or interviews (e.g., transportation, communication, recreation, jobs, housing).

G.1.3.5 Investigate the cultural characteristics of various places and regions from around the world.

G.1.3.6 Investigate the influence of physical characteristics upon people's choices in Arkansas and the United States (i.e., where people live and work).

H.1.3.3 Compare life from a specific historical time period to life today noting changes over time (e.g., transportation, jobs, urban growth, population density, natural resources, communication).

H.1.4.3 Compare life from a specific historical time period to life today to explain changes over time (e.g., economic growth, urbanization, resources, population density, environmental issues).

G.3.5.4 Research the characteristics of various world regions and cultures

Vocabulary

Card:

to disentangle, clean, and intermix fibers to produce material suitable for use

Cotton:

plant that produces fibers from which many textiles are woven

Wool:

a fabric made from the hair of a sheep

Synthetic:

not naturally produced; made by artificial processes

Spinning Wheel:

A device used to make thread by spinning fibers together through the use of a big wheel.

Natural:

existing in or caused by nature; not made or caused by humankind

Vocabulary

Polyester:

Any of a large number of synthetic resins used in making plastics and fibers

Nylon:

a silk-like thermoplastic often used in modern clothing

Acrylic:

fabric made from plastic threads

Loom:

a device used to weave cloth and tapestry

Cotton Gin:

a machine that removed seeds from cotton fiber

Context

In the 1800s, Arkansas was a key part of the American South, where cotton was king. The cotton industry was central to the economy, and the production of cotton textiles played a significant role in daily life and the broader economic landscape. Understanding cotton textiles involves examining the agricultural, industrial, and social aspects of cotton production and textile manufacturing.

Cotton Cultivation

1. Agriculture:

- Climate and Soil: Arkansas's warm climate and fertile soil were ideal for growing cotton.
- Planting and Harvesting: Cotton was planted in the spring and harvested in the late summer and fall. The labor-intensive process involved planting seeds, tending the plants, and picking the cotton bolls by hand.

2. Labor:

- Enslaved Labor: The cotton industry relied heavily on enslaved African Americans, who provided the necessary labor for planting, tending, and harvesting cotton.
- Work Conditions: Enslaved workers faced harsh conditions, long hours, and brutal treatment.

3. Ginning:

- Cotton Gin: Invented by Eli Whitney in 1793, the cotton gin separated cotton fibers from seeds quickly and efficiently, revolutionizing cotton production.
- Impact: The cotton gin increased the demand for cotton and, consequently, the demand for enslaved labor.

Cotton Textile Production

1. Spinning and Weaving:

- Spinning: The process of turning raw cotton fibers into thread or yarn. This was initially done by hand using a spinning wheel but later by mechanized spinning machines.
- Weaving: The process of interlacing threads to create fabric. Hand looms were used before the advent of power looms, which mechanized the weaving process.

2. Textile Mills:

By the mid-19th century, textile mills began to emerge, particularly in the Northern United States. These mills processed raw cotton into finished textiles. Advances in textile machinery, such as the spinning jenny, water frame, and power loom, greatly increased production efficiency.

3. Products:

Common cotton textiles included muslin, calico, and denim. Textiles were used for clothing, household items like sheets and towels, and other goods.

Context

Economic and Social Impact

1. Economic Significance:

Cotton was a major export, driving trade and economic growth. Arkansas, along with other Southern states, supplied raw cotton to textile mills in the North and Europe. Wealthy plantation owners, or planters, dominated the economy and politics of Arkansas, benefiting the most from the cotton industry.

2. Social Structure:

The cotton economy reinforced social hierarchies, with wealthy planters at the top, followed by poor white farmers, and enslaved African Americans at the bottom. The cotton industry perpetuated the institution of slavery, with enslaved people enduring grueling labor and harsh conditions.

3. Cultural Influence:

Cotton textiles were a part of everyday life, influencing clothing styles and household goods. The production and trade of cotton had a profound impact on the culture and identity of the American South.

Challenges and Changes

1. Market Fluctuations:

The cotton market was subject to price fluctuations, influenced by factors such as supply and demand, international trade policies, and weather conditions. Economic downturns could significantly impact cotton farmers and the broader economy.

2. Civil War and Reconstruction:

The Civil War (1861-1865) and the abolition of slavery had a profound impact on the cotton industry. Reconstruction efforts and changes in labor systems, including sharecropping and tenant farming, reshaped the agricultural landscape.

Context

Teaching Tips

- Visual Aids: Use provided images or replicas of cotton plants,, spinning wheels, looms, and textiles. Maps showing cotton-growing regions and trade routes can also be helpful.
- Hands-on Activities: Students will have the opportunity to card cotton at the museum.
- Primary Sources: Included are Records from the Slave Narratives, articles and advertisements of the period.
- Comparative Analysis: Compare the cotton textile industry of the 1800s with modern textile production. Discuss technological advancements and their impact on labor and production.

Discussion Questions:

- How did cotton cultivation and textile production shape the economy and society of 1800s Arkansas?
- What were the key technological innovations in the cotton textile industry, and how did they impact production?
- How did the reliance on enslaved labor affect the social and economic structure of Arkansas?

Understanding the cotton textile industry in 1800s Arkansas provides students with insights into the state's economic development, the impact of technological innovations, and the social dynamics of the time.

Primary Source Analysis

On the following pages are primary sources for teachers to review with their students. As you review the materials, promote student inquiry. Be sure to ask them about things that they notice or things that they wonder. You may also ask students about the author's purpose, how this source ties into what they have learned in class or from prior knowledge.

Analyze a Photograph



Meet the photo.

What do you see?

Is the photo?

☐ BLACK AND WHITE ☐ COLOR

Is there a caption?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If so, what does the caption tell you?

Observe its parts.

Circle what you see in the photo.



PEOPLE



OBJECTS



BOTH

What are the people doing in the photo?

What are the objects used for in the photo?

Write two words that describe the photo.

Try to make sense of it.

Who do you think took this photo?

Where do you think this photo was taken?

List something that helps you prove where it was taken.

Why do you think the photo was taken?

How does this photo compare to modern times?

Use it as historical evidence.

Where do you think you could find out more information about the people or objects in the photo?



Image ~ "Picking Cotton"



Large cotton field with two men on horseback and ten people picking cotton. All that are picking cotton appear to be black. A large basket is visible as is part of a wagon with cotton bags inside. On verso written in pencil "Black slaves picking cotton. (1860 - 1865) extremely rare and unpublished." From other sources we have determined that this image was produced by J. P. Jones at a plantation near Helena on the Mississippi River.

Jones, J. P. *Picking Cotton.*, 1860 – 1865, carte de visite, 2 7/16 h X 3 15/16 w inches, Accession# 97.058. Historic Arkansas Museum, Little Rock, AR.

Analyze a Written Document



Meet the document.

Are there any special markings on the document? Circle all that apply.



STAMP



POSTMARK



HANDWRITTEN
NOTE



OFFICIAL
SEAL



SPECIAL
LETTERHEAD



OTHER

Is it handwritten or typed?



Write down any words that you don't know. Then look up the definitions.



Try to make sense of it.

What is the main idea of the document?

List two quotes (words from the document) that help support the main idea.

Observe its parts.

Who wrote this document?

What is the date of the document?

Who read or received this document?



Use it as historical evidence.

Where do you think you could find out more information about the persons who wrote or received this document?

Where do you think you could find out more information about this event?



Document ~ "Cotton is King."

Cotton is King.

The feeling occasioned by the dependence of England upon our slave labor for cotton (says the Baltimore American) was very strongly manifested in Parliament on a recent occasion when, in a debate upon the destruction of Greytown, such Parliamentary leaders as D'Israeli and Roebuck indicated that dependence to be the cause of a submissive tone towards and endurance of wrong from this country that no other people received at the hands of the British government. Blackwood in 1853, in reference to the cultivation of the article by the United States, ascribed to it an influence that had placed the eternal peace and the subsistence of the millions in every manufacturing country in Europe with the power of an oligarchy of planters, and the London Economist more strongly stating the case, has declared that if "any great social or physical convulsion visit the United States, England would feel the shock from Land's End to John O'Groats. The lives of nearly two million of countrymen are dependent upon the cotton crops of America; their destiny may be said without any kind of hyperbole to hang upon a thread. Should any dire calamity befall the land of cotton, a thousand of our merchant ships would rot idly in the dock; ten thousand mills must stop their busy looms; two thousand mouths would starve for lack of food to feed them." McCullough also shows that as far back as 1852, the British exports of cotton fabrics were equal in value to about two-thirds of all the woven fabrics exported from the empire. The same state of things, nearly, existed in 1849, when the cotton fabrics were valued at about \$140,000, while all the other woven fabrics exported did not quite reach to the value of \$68,000,000.

"Cotton is King." *True Democrat*, September 1, 1857,

<https://www.newspapers.com/article/true-democrat-cotton-is-king-1857/156381923/>

Arkansas Slave Narratives

SLAVE NARRATIVES

The following pages contain interviews with former slaves and include recollections of the cotton industry. These narratives are presented in their original form and have not been altered since their creation between 1936- 1938.

While these narratives provide limited insights regarding enslavement and the cotton industry of the south, it is important to note that more than 70 years had elapsed between Emancipation and the time that the interviews were conducted. Consequently, most interviewees were very elderly by the time the interviews were attained.

In addition. Many of the interviewers were amateurs, inexperienced and unsophisticated in the use of interview techniques. While these selected narratives are not at all inclusive, they do offer evidence of the resilience, creativity and imagination African American children demonstrated even while living in bondage.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR TEACHERS: Some of the terms used in these interviews are no longer considered appropriate to use. Please review these materials and familiarize yourself with any language that might be considered offensive so you can make an informed decision on the appropriateness of presenting them to your students.

Document ~ Slave Narrative of "Aunt Susie King, Ex-slave"

Interviewer Zillah Cross Peel

Information given by Aunt Susie King, Ex-slave.

Residence Cane Hill, Arkansas. Washington County. Age about 93.

"Yes'm, my mother's name was Sally. She'd belonged to Mister Tom H. Barker and he gived her to Miss Becky, his daughter. I think of them all lots of days. I know a heap of folks that some times I forgot. When the War came, we lived in a big log house. We had a loom room back of the kitchen. I had a good mother. She wove some. We all wove mos' all of the blankets and carpets and counterpane and Old Missey she loved to sit down at the loom and weave some," with a gay chuckle Aunty Susie said," then she'd let me weave an' Old Missey she'd say I takes her work and the loom away from her. I did love to weave, all them bright colores, blue and red and green and yellow. They made all the colors in the back yard in a big kettle, my mother, Sally did the colorin' ".

Document ~ Slave Narrative of "Omelia Thomas" Part 1

Interviewer Samuel S. Taylor
Person interviewed Omelia Thomas
1014 W. Fifth Street, Little Rock, Arkansas
Age 63

"My mother was a motherless girl. My daddy said he looked at her struggling along. All the other girls were trying to have a good time. But she would be settin' down trying to make a quilt or something else useful, and he said to a friend of his, 'That woman would make a good wife; I am going to marry her.' And he did.

"She used to spin her fine and coarse sewing thread and yarn to make socks and stockings with. Her stockings and socks for the babies and papa would always be yarn. She could do pretty work. She had a large family. She had seventeen children and she kept them all in things she made herself. She raised ten of them. She would make the thread and yarn and the socks and stockings for all of these. I have known the time when she used to make coats and pants for my father and brothers.

Document ~ Slave Narrative of “Omelia Thomas” Part 2

She would make them by hand because they didn't have any machines then. Of course, she made all the underwear. She put up preserves and jellies for us to eat in the winter. She used to put up kraut and stuff by the barrel. I have seen some happy days when I was with my daddy and mother. He raised pigs and hogs and chickens and cows. He raised all kinds of peas and vegetables. He raised those things chiefly for the home, and he made cotton for money. He would save about eight or ten bales and put them under his shed for stockings and clothes and everything. He would have another cotton selling in March.

Analyze an Artifact or Object



Meet the Artifact.

What do you think it is?

Observe its parts.

What do you think the object is made out of? Circle all that apply.



BONE



CERAMIC
POTTERY



FABRIC



GLASS



LEATHER



METAL



PAPER



PLASTIC



STONE



WOOD

How do you think the object feels?

Circle all that apply.



HEAVY



LIGHT



SMOOTH



ROUGH



HARD



SOFT

What is the color of the object?

What is the shape of the object?

What size is the object? Circle one.

SMALL



LIKE A
COIN

MEDIUM



LIKE A
BASKETBALL

LARGE



LIKE A
CAR

What are three words that describe the object?

Try to make sense of it.

What do you think the object was used for?

Who do you think would have used the object?

What does the object tell us about the time period when it was made and used?

Do we still use this object today? If so, how is it different?



Use it as historical evidence.

Where do you think you could find out more information about the object or the people who used it?



Artifact ~ Cotton Cards



The label on the back of the cards, used to prepare cotton for spinning, reads "The Only Genuine Old Whittmore Patent Improved, No. A 10 Cotton."

Cotton Cards, 19th century, wood & metal, Accession# 88.006.0005. Historic Arkansas Museum, Little Rock, AR.

Artifact ~ Quilt



This patchwork applique quilt is of tulips or peonies with greens and reds. It was made by Nancy Stroud Cheek, born in 1801 and died in 1884. She was a native of Tennessee but moved to Pleasant Plains (earlier known as Fairview) in Independence County, Arkansas with her daughter and son-in-law (Julia and George McCauley). This quilt was a wedding gift to Mrs. Cheek's grandson.

Stroud, Nancy. Quilt, 1840-1860, cotton, 104h x 92.5w inches, Accession# 72.009. Historic Arkansas Museum, Little Rock, AR.