CHAPTER 13

The Sections Go Their Ways

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

*Directions:* Before you begin reading this chapter, place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you *now* agree. Use the column entitled “Anticipation.” When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you *then* agree. Use the column entitled “Reaction.” Note any variation in the placement of check marks from *anticipation to reaction* and explain why you changed your mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____ 1. By 1850, cotton was losing its dominance in southern agriculture, and the economic importance of slavery was declining.</td>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>_____ 2. Because of its increasingly higher costs and inefficiencies, slavery was an unprofitable system of labor by 1850.</td>
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<td>_____ 3. Once the Atlantic slave trade was outlawed in 1808, America’s slave population grew very slowly.</td>
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<td>_____ 4. Early-nineteenth-century factory workers’ wages were high enough to prevent a “poor class” from developing in the United States.</td>
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<td>_____ 5. Although labor unions were legal in the early nineteenth century, few efforts at labor organization were successful.</td>
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<td>_____ 6. Most of the investment capital that built America’s early railroads came from local and state governments and from the federal government.</td>
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<td>_____ 7. By 1860, American farmers had become so productive that <em>over</em>production had become a problem.</td>
<td>7.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 13 you should be able to:

1. Assess the importance of slavery to the South’s economy between 1820 and 1860.
2. Describe the sociological and psychological dimensions of slave life on the eve of the Civil War.
3. Describe the conditions of northern labor in the mid-nineteenth century and explain why workers did not organize in their own interests.
4. Summarize the significance of the railroads to the development of the national economy before the Civil War.
5. Explain how the economic differences between the North and South and the pattern of railroad construction fed sectional sentiment before the Civil War.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The South

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the United States was developing a national market economy marked by regional interdependence and increased agricultural and industrial specialization. The South remained predominantly agricultural. It was less affected than other sections by urbanization, European immigration, the transportation revolution, and industrialization. Cotton was still king in the Deep South, and it remained the major American export and continued to march westward. But the Upper South, with the use of fertilizers and other agricultural innovations, produced tobacco, corn, and wheat and an increasing diversity of crops.

The Economics of Slavery

As the cotton culture spread westward, slavery strengthened its hold on the South. The demand for slaves was greatest in the Deep South, and the Upper South and seaboard states sold over a million of their slaves “down the river” at ever higher prices. Slave trading was a profitable business, but it frequently led to the break-up of slave families, especially in the Upper South. As the price of slaves increased, only wealthy southerners could afford to buy them, so by 1860 slave ownership was concentrated in the hands of only one-fourth of southern families. Slavery was profitable, but it diverted southern capital away from investment in trade and manufacturing. Thus, northern business firms handled the marketing and transportation of the southern cotton crop. At bottom, slavery was a stagnant and inefficient labor system that wasted talent and energy.
Antebellum Plantation Life

A “typical” plantation resembled a small village or a self-sufficient colonial farm. In slaveholding families, the division of labor was less gender-related than in the North, and, though the system was paternalistic, southern women had immense responsibilities on the plantation. Both slave men and women worked as field hands, but slave children typically were given only small tasks until the age of ten. Slave families typically lived in crude one-room cabins.

The Sociology of Slavery

Unlike in other slave systems, the southern slave population grew by natural increase. Only about a half-million slaves had been imported by 1808 when the foreign slave trade ended, but there were four million blacks in the United States in 1860. This was a growth rate nearly equal to the white.

How slaves were treated depended on the master, although their economic value gave some protection to slaves, and white masters usually supplied adequate care to their slaves. Still, slaves had a higher infant mortality rate and shorter life expectancy than whites. Slaves had no legal rights, but they found some relief from their oppression in their families and their religion. Within these institutions they were able to sustian a sense of their own worth and enjoy spiritual freedom.

Most whites thought slaves were inherently lazy. But this “laziness” was the slave’s rational response to forced, uncompensated labor. Most whites also mistakenly believed that slaves were content with their situation. Paradoxically, whites also feared slave insurrection. Savage reprisal was the fate of slave rebels such as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, and white fears made the slave system increasingly oppressive. Interest in abolishing slavery vanished in the South, and state laws made it more difficult for masters to free their own slaves.

Slaves were much harder to supervise and control in cities. So, because of slavery, the South remained rural and agricultural. Whites considered free blacks a dangerous example for slaves, and many states passed laws that required free blacks to emigrate. These laws, and anti-slave trade laws, were not strictly enforced because of the South’s need for black labor, slave or free.

Psychological Effects of Slavery

Slavery was unjust and corroded the personalities of both slaves and whites. Slave revolts were infrequent, but runaways were common. Other slaves seemed resigned to their fate, or found less dramatic ways to protest the system. Slaves had strong families, their own culture, and a sense of community—all of which sustained them—but slavery discouraged their development of independent judgment and self-reliance.
Slavery also warped the whites. Whites developed contradictory stereotypes of slaves’ nature. To whites, slaves were at the same time lazy and aggressive, nurturing and seductive. White men often took advantage of slave women, and the system generally encouraged whites to be self-indulgent. Slavery also degraded manual labor in the eyes of the South’s poor whites, and it provided unsuccessful whites with a scapegoat for their failure. It also reinforced the tendency toward male dominance in southern society and it caused otherwise decent people to be cruel.

**Manufacturing in the South**

There was some manufacturing in the antebellum South. The availability of cotton and waterpower made textile manufacturing profitable. But southern manufacturing was small in scale compared to the North; in 1860 less than 15 percent of the nation’s manufactured goods came from the South, and even that depended on technical and financial aid from the North.

**The Northern Industrial Juggernaut**

Industry grew rapidly in the North. There, steam power was critical to the expansion of the factory system, and industry was remarkably receptive to technological change. In the United States, individual freedom encouraged resourcefulness and experimentation, business growth encouraged new techniques, and the shortage of skilled labor encouraged the substitution of machinery. America’s industrial revolution also rested on a growing availability of a seemingly inexhaustible supply of natural resources. Americans were also losing their historical prejudice against corporations, making possible the larger accumulation of capital. Industrial growth increased the demand for labor, but the expanding western frontier drained off many eastern laborers and artisans who would not work for low wages in industry. New machinery weakened the bargaining power of skilled workers by making their skills less important. Immigration, capital investment from Europe, improvements in transportation, population growth, and the absence of internal tariff barriers also helped stimulate industry and expand the national market for manufactured goods.

**A Nation of Immigrants**

Industrial expansion created jobs that attracted thousands of immigrants to the United States. Resident “native” Americans tended to look down on these immigrants, and natives and immigrants shared a prejudice toward blacks. By 1860, Irish immigrants, who seemed a more permanent and pliable work force, had largely replaced the young farmwomen who worked in New England’s textile mills.
How Wage Earners Lived

Immigrants and factory workers often lived in crowded slums in industrial cities where life was squalid and dangerous. Low wages meant wives and children of most factory workers also had to work to help the family survive. Nevertheless, most skilled workers improved their lot somewhat.

Most workers did not belong to unions. Early unions and workingmen’s political parties were virtually destroyed by internal bickering and the depression of the late 1830s. Nevertheless, in the 1840s and 1850s many states passed laws that both limited the workday to ten hours and regulated child labor. In Commonwealth v. Hunt (1842), the Massachusetts courts established the legality of labor unions, and other state courts followed this precedent. Still, before 1860 most labor unions were small and local. Laborers rarely thought of themselves as members of a permanent working class. Republican values, a high rate of social and geographic mobility, and the availability of immigrant, women, and child workers, made labor organization difficult.

Progress and Poverty

Mid-nineteenth-century America was a land of opportunity with a relatively high standard of living. Yet, at the same time there was an underclass of poorly-paid and unskilled workers, mostly immigrants. Toward these, middle-class Americans seemed indifferent or unaware. Industrialization and the immigration of poor workers made American society more stratified and widened the differences in wealth and status. Still, the ideology of egalitarian democracy endured.

Foreign Commerce

Foreign commerce grew dramatically in the 1840s and 1850s. The United States mostly exported raw materials (cotton was the most valuable export), and it usually imported more (mostly manufactured goods) than it exported. Britain was the best customer of the United States and its leading supplier. Regularly scheduled sailing packets concentrated trade in New York and a few other large cities. The fast and sleek clipper ships enjoyed brief popularity at mid-century, but they were too costly for general use.

Steam Conquers the Atlantic

By the late 1840s, steamships had captured much of the Atlantic freight and passenger traffic. These British-built vessels, stronger and larger than wooden sailing ships, challenged America’s shipbuilding industry. Competition, government subsidies, and new technology reduced trans-Atlantic shipping rates. Bargain rates in steerage enabled tens of thousands of European immigrants to come to the United States.
Canals and Railroads

America’s internal trade increased and shifted directions. The Erie Canal heralded the origins of a significant east-west trade. Railroads did not at first compete with canal traffic; they were originally designed to handle only local trade. Engineering and technical problems, and America’s tough terrain, at first inhibited the construction of long-distance lines. But, by 1860 four railroads stretched from the Atlantic Coast to the Ohio Valley. Within the Northeast and Northwest building railroads went on at a feverish pace, but was much slower in the South.

Financing the Railroads

Slave labor built the South’s railroads; immigrants built the North’s. Private investors supplied most of the investment capital, particularly when their communities stood to profit from the railroad. Longer east-west rail lines usually required some public funding. State and local aid came in the form of loans, investments, and tax exemptions. The federal government helped by granting federal lands to states to build railroads. Often, construction of the railroads was as profitable as their operation, and wheeler dealing and corruption were common.

Railroads and the Economy

Farmers were profoundly affected by the railroads. Location of the lines helped determine what land could be profitably cultivated. Railroad companies created farms by selling portions of their federal land grants as farm sites. With access to world markets, prices for farm goods were high, but farm labor was scarce. Farm machinery appeared to ease the labor shortage. Steel plows and mechanical reapers reduced the labor and time required to plant and harvest.

Cities were also affected by the railroads. Chicago became the railroad center of the Midwest. Railroads also stimulated other kinds of economic activity. They influenced real estate values, spurred regional concentration of industry, increased the size of business units, and stimulated the growth of investment banking. Railroads also revolutionized business organization and management, and they sharply reduced freight and passenger rates. Finally, railroads revolutionized western agriculture; the center of commercial wheat production moved to the Midwest.

Railroads and the Sectional Conflict

While they helped boost the western farm family’s income and standard of living, railroads also broke down their isolation and self-sufficiency. This commercialization of agriculture meant that western farmers became more dependent on middlemen to market their crop. Overproduction also became a problem, and it became increasingly more costly to start and operate a farm.
The linking of the East and West had fateful effects in politics. The increasing movement of goods and people by railroads and canals stimulated nationalism in the Northeast and Northwest. With the Northwest no longer dependent on the Mississippi River trade route, its citizens could afford to oppose slavery and its westward expansion. The anti-commercial attitudes of southern leaders, together with its scattered population, absence of large cities, and stubborn reliance on the Mississippi River, prevented the South from keeping pace with northern railroad construction.

The Economy on the Eve of the Civil War

Between 1845 and 1857 every economic indicator expressed the remarkable growth of the American economy. This growth caused some problems. The Panic of 1857 was a serious, though short-lived collapse that was especially hard on the Northwest. The South, however, was affected very little by the Panic, and this encouraged many southerners to believe they had a superior economic system and might be better off out of the Union.

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Define the following:

antebellum

plantation

clipper ship

Describe the following:

Commonwealth v. Hunt

Baltimore and Ohio Railroad
Panic of 1857

Identify the following:

“poor white trash”

Denmark Vesey

Nat Turner

John Deere

Cyrus McCormick

SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the nation’s economy was marked by all of the following EXCEPT
   A. increasing regional interdependence.
   B. regional specialization of production.
   C. several transportation improvements.
   D. the decline of slavery.

2. As the cotton culture spread westward in the early nineteenth century,
   A. planters in the Deep South diversified their crops.
   B. the price of slaves declined.
   C. the demand for slaves increased.
   D. slave ownership became less profitable.
3. By 1860 about _______ percent of southern families owned slaves.
   A. 10
   B. 25
   C. 50
   D. 65

4. Antebellum slaves had all the following EXCEPT
   A. many basic legal rights.
   B. a higher infant mortality rate than whites.
   C. a shorter life span than whites.
   D. adequate food, housing, and clothing.

5. Generally, southern whites did NOT believe that slaves were
   A. innately lazy.
   B. prone to rebellion.
   C. content with their enslavement.
   D. incapable of hard work.

6. The LEAST frequent means used by slaves to protest their condition was
   A. revolt.
   B. escape.
   C. feigned laziness.
   D. subterfuge.

7. In the antebellum period, slaves were NOT able to develop
   A. their own slave culture.
   B. a strong sense of community.
   C. individual self-reliance.
   D. a sense of their own self-worth.

8. Mid-nineteenth-century American industry lacked
   A. technological inventiveness.
   B. a stable labor force.
   C. availability of ample raw materials.
   D. organizational and managerial skill.

9. Most immigrants to mid-nineteenth-century America were attracted by the promise of
   A. religious freedom.
   B. political freedom.
   C. social respect.
   D. economic opportunity.
10. In *Commonwealth v. Hunt* the courts legalized
   A. child labor.
   B. corporations.
   C. slave marriages.
   D. labor unions.

11. In mid-nineteenth-century America
   A. class distinctions were narrowing.
   B. faith in the idea of egalitarian democracy was fading.
   C. Americans enjoyed a relatively high standard of living.
   D. geographical population mobility was declining.

12. In its foreign commerce the United States usually ______ raw materials and ______ manufactured goods; and it usually ______ more than it ______.
   A. exported, imported; exported, imported
   B. imported, exported; imported, exported
   C. exported, imported; imported, exported
   D. imported, exported; exported, imported

13. America’s dominance in the shipbuilding industry was most severely challenged by the development of ocean-going
   A. sailing packets.
   B. clipper ships.
   C. commerce raiders.
   D. steamships.

14. Railroad construction by 1860 most closely tied together the economies of the
   A. Northeast and Northwest.
   B. Northeast and South.
   C. Northwest and South.
   D. Northwest and Far West.

15. Most of the capital available for railroad construction before the Civil War was supplied by
   A. local community loans.
   B. private investors.
   C. state tax exemptions.
   D. federal land grants.

16. All of the following were true of mid-nineteenth-century American farms EXCEPT
   A. farm labor was scarce.
   B. the standard of living was declining.
   C. reliance on the railroad was increasing.
   D. reliance on machinery was increasing.
17. _______ became the railroad center of the Midwest by 1860.
   A. Cincinnati
   B. Louisville
   C. Chicago
   D. St. Louis

18. Railroads did NOT stimulate
   A. the growth of business corporations.
   B. decentralization of industrial production.
   C. investment banking.
   D. adoption of new forms of business management.

19. The coming of the railroad and machinery to western farmers did NOT increase their
   A. self-sufficiency.
   B. reliance on middlemen.
   C. operating costs.
   D. productivity.

20. The Panic of 1857 was of relatively little consequence to the economy of the
   A. Northwest.
   B. Northeast.
   C. South.

**Essay Questions**

1. Explain why, in economic terms, the South could not abandon its system of slave labor between 1820 and 1860.

2. Assume the role of an antebellum slave. Describe a sequence of “typical” experiences in your life and relate your thoughts and feelings about these experiences.

3. Assume the role of a northern wage laborer in the 1840s. Describe a sequence of “typical” experiences in your life and relate your thoughts and feelings about these experiences.

4. List the contributions the railroads made to the growth of the national economy in the mid-nineteenth century.

5. Analyze the role that agriculture, industry, commerce, and transportation played in the growth of sectional consciousness between 1830 and 1860.
### Critical Thinking Exercise

#### Facts, Inferences, and Judgments

Search the following narrative for statements of fact, inference, and judgment. Circle the appropriate letter on the answer grid for each numbered statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Facts (F)</th>
<th>Inference (I)</th>
<th>Judgment (J)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The injustice of slavery needs no proof . . .</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) By “the making of a human being an animal without hope,” the system bore heavily on all slaves’ sense of their own worth.</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(3) Some found the condition absolutely unbearable. . .</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(4) Denmark Vesey of South Carolina, even after buying his freedom, could not stomach the subservience demanded of slaves by the system.</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(5) When he saw Charleston slaves step into the gutter to make way for whites, he taunted them: “You deserve to remain slaves!” . . .</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(6) So vehemently did he argue that some of his followers claimed they feared Vesey more than their masters, even more than God. . .</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(7) For Denmark Vesey, death was probably preferable to living with such rage as his soul contained.</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(8) Most slaves appeared, if not contented, at least resigned to their fate.</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(9) Many seemed even to accept the whites’ evaluation of their inherent abilities and place in society.</td>
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<td>(10) Of course in most instances it is impossible to know whether this apparent subservience was feigned in order to avoid trouble. . .</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(11) Slaves had strong family and group attachments and a complex culture of their own, maintained, so to speak, under the noses of their masters.</td>
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<td>(12) By a mixture of subterfuge, accommodation, and passive resistance, they erected subtle defenses against exploitation. . .</td>
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<td>(13) When every element in white society encouraged slaves to let others do their thinking for them, to avoid questioning the status quo, to lead a simple life, many did so willingly enough.</td>
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<td>(14) Was this not slavery’s greatest shame?</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(15) Probably the large majority of owners respected the most fundamental personal rights of their slaves.</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>(16) There are countless known cases of lasting relationships based on love and mutual respect between owners and what law and the community defined as their property [that is, their slaves].</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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