Summary: Life in the South

Southern Agriculture

The Southern Colonies had an agricultural economy. The climate was good for growing crops. Planters used enslaved Africans to do the hard work needed to grow tobacco and rice.

In Virginia and Maryland, tobacco was the most important crop. In North Carolina, colonists used sticky pine sap to make pitch. Pitch was used to seal the boards of a ship to keep out water. In South Carolina and Georgia, the main crops were rice and indigo.

The Southern Colonies had fewer towns and cities than other colonies. Charles Town was the capital of South Carolina. It was the biggest southern city and a busy trade center.

Plantations and Small Farms

Plantations were huge, with many buildings and workers. Planters' children had private teachers. They learned reading, writing, and dancing. Later, parents taught their children how to manage a large plantation.

However, most colonists lived on small farms in the backcountry, away from schools and towns. Farmers' children only learned to read and write if their parents taught them.

Southern Slavery

Slaves lived in all the colonies by 1750. Most lived in the Southern Colonies. Enslaved Africans were treated as if they were property, not people. Plantation owners used cruel laws and punishments to make slaves work hard. Some overseers whipped and even killed workers. Many slaves died young because of this bad treatment. Some ran away. Others created a new culture that blended African traditions to help them survive. They formed close communities. Many adopted Christianity. They combined African music with their religious beliefs to make powerful spirituals.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

indigo *noun,* a plant that can be made into a dark blue dye

overseer *noun,* a person who watches and directs the work of other people

spiritual *noun,* an African American religious folk song

After You Read

REVIEW **Why was Charles Town an important city?** Highlight the sentences that describe Charles Town.

REVIEW **How did the children of planters and the children of backcountry farmers learn how to read and write?** Who taught planters' children? Who taught farmers' children? Find two sentences that tell the answers and underline them.

REVIEW **What did slaves do to survive the hardships of slavery?** Draw a box around the sentences that tell the answer.

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