



SLAVERY

by Another Name

THE PRICE OF LABOR

GRADE LEVEL: 9-12

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OVERVIEW

This activity guide examines the vital role that labor played in the development of the South after the Civil War as it moved toward industrialization. Using the rise of Birmingham, Alabama, as an example, students will be introduced to the various forced-labor systems — which also subjugated child workers — that industrialists used to trigger and sustain industrial growth. Students will also define exploitation and consider its use in modern labor forces.

BACKGROUND

After the Civil War, the South's Confederate-issued currency was worthless and its financial system in ruins. With the abolishment of slavery, much of Southern planters' wealth had disappeared and they no longer had access to slave labor. Former slaves were now legally free to move from job to job or to attempt to create their own business, but had little access to cash or credit. In addition, as the country moved toward industrialization, the need for labor became a top priority. In this environment, intricate systems of forced labor, which guaranteed cheap labor, flourished. Coupled with the white supremacists' desire to keep blacks in a position as close to slavery as possible, businessmen, plantation owners, and industrialists turned to peonage, convict leasing, and sharecropping as systems to generate controllable, cheap black labor. The Old South, and what was quickly becoming the New South, could not proceed without the labor of blacks.

One of the South's first industrial centers was Birmingham, Alabama, founded in 1871. Fed by intersecting railway lines and rich natural ore resources used to make steel, the city was positioned to represent this new industrial South. John T. Milner, who most consider to be the father of industrialization in the Deep South, was a visionary and savvy businessman who was also a former slaveholder. Industrialists like Milner quickly realized that free labor wasn't as malleable as the slave labor they were used to, but they could force prisoners to work excessively every day and control their every move. He led a number of industrialists who replaced slaves with convicts after Emancipation — acquiring thousands from state and county governments.

Initially, to save money on prison construction and later to actually generate revenue, states and counties began leasing “convicts” to commercial enterprises, large corporations, farmers, small-time entrepreneurs and businesspeople like Milner. Prisoners were leased to nearly every industry in the South including coal mines, sawmills, railroads, brickworks and plantations. These prisoners lived and worked under unspeakable conditions; many were tortured or died in captivity.

To employers and industrialists, leased convicts were cheap, disposable labor. Unable to quit or strike, and not paid for their work, convict laborers were forced into whatever the working conditions were in the places where they were leased. In some companies, free and convict laborers worked side-by-side. However, convict labor was always reliable, and that made it attractive to employers. The costs to lease a laborer were minimal, and the cost of providing housing, food, clothing, and medical treatment could be kept low. Replacement costs were cheap, unlike with slavery, where slaves were expensive to purchase. There was no incentive to treat a forced laborer well. Thus, convict leasing was often described as “worse than slavery.”

As the use of convict leasing grew, so did the prison population, aided by the implementation and enforcement of laws that targeted blacks — such as the pig laws and vagrancy statutes — by Southern states.

In addition to “convicts,” forced laborers included untold numbers of others. Many were victims of peonage or debt slavery, an illegal but widespread practice of coerced labor to pay off debts. Others were victims of laws that made it a crime to leave employment for another job, keeping many blacks working under intolerable conditions as sharecroppers or elsewhere, rather than face the terrifying possibility of being arrested and sent to a forced labor camp.

For additional background, visit the *Slavery by Another Name* Theme Gallery:

Labor Types:

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/labor-types/>

Convict Leasing:

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/convict-leasing/>

Company Towns:

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/company-towns/>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What role did forced labor play in the development and growth of the South after the Civil War as it moved toward industrialization?
2. What systems of forced labor did businesspeople, plantation owners and industrialists use to acquire and control cheap labor forces? How did those systems work?
3. What is exploitation and in what ways is labor susceptible to it?

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

Labor forces play significant roles in the development and economies of a place, and as a result, are susceptible to exploitation and illegal practices such as the use of forced labor systems that continue to be practiced today.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY: A CITY IS BORN

Materials

- A City Is Born

Note to Educators: For maximum effectiveness, facilitate Activities 1 and 2, A City is Born and Labor is Key, in succession.

1. Proposition students with the following: It's 1870 and you want to start an industrialized city in the South. What would you need? Remind students of the position of the South during this time. Emancipation Proclamation had been issued a few years earlier, the country was in Reconstruction and the South's economic system, previously very much dependent on slave labor and the harvesting of cotton, was in shambles. Also review with students what industrialization means and why there was a desire in the South for a shift away from an agrarian society.
2. Have students brainstorm independently a list of what would be needed to establish a city under these conditions.
3. After a few minutes, have students share items on their list to create a class list of the resources needed to build an industrialized city.
4. Tell students that they are going to investigate further what it took to build a city, by looking at the birth and growth of Birmingham, Alabama. After the Civil War,

Birmingham emerged as one of the South's largest industrial centers and is a model for the transition from the Old South, to the new industrial South.

5. Prepare to view "Reflections on Birmingham" by facilitating a discussion using the pre-viewing questions. Provide students with background on the clip. After viewing, facilitate a discussion using the post-viewing questions. Advise students to listen carefully.
6. Distribute "A City Is Born." Have students complete the chart with factors that led to Birmingham's growth and the overall impact of those factors. Consider replaying "Reflections on Birmingham" while students complete the chart.
7. Review the chart as a class and complete it together using student responses. Continue the discussion about what was required to grow and industrialize Southern cities after the Civil War.
8. Next display this quote: "Birmingham prospered because the proximity of raw materials and the large pool of cheap labor, especially black labor, enabled local industries to produce the nation's cheapest pig iron." This quote was pulled from "Sloss Furnaces: A Story of Iron and the Men Who Made It" by Paige Wainwright (*Alabama Heritage* magazine, Summer 1994). Explain to students that pig iron was used to make cast iron.
9. Ask students to define cheap labor. Then inquire about what type of cheap, black labor was available in the years following the Emancipation Proclamation. Explain to students that free labor was paid, while other labor, the bulk of which was black, were not paid, but instead forced to work because they were considered convicts or because they owed a debt that was often not legitimate.
10. Have students write a one-page response to the quote from a historical and contemporary standpoint. Have students consider the implications and impacts of the use of cheap and forced labor.

ACTIVITY: LABOR IS KEY

1. Reignite a discussion about the two major elements that helped to birth Birmingham: industry and labor. Reiterate that in Birmingham's case, its major industries were iron and steel because the city was situated near the rich mineral resources required to develop it. But without labor, and large supplies of it, the city would not be able to produce steel.
2. Next, ask students to identify where they could secure a labor force to spur industry in their fictitious American city. Sample answers include people already residing in their city, immigrants, people who migrated, and so on.

3. Prepare to view “A New Labor Force” by facilitating a discussion using the pre-viewing questions. Provide students with background on the clip. After viewing, facilitate a discussion using the post-viewing questions.
4. Next, prepare to view “The Economics of Labor” by facilitating a discussion using the pre-viewing questions. Provide students with background on the clip. After viewing, facilitate a discussion using the post-viewing questions.
5. Initiate a discussion about how industrialists like John T. Milner and J.W. Comer secured the majority of their labor forces. Though industrialists did utilize free labor, which included free blacks, immigrants and Southern whites, have students consider the convict leasing system as a legal operation in which states leased convicts to private industry for profit. Also discuss the fact that as the use of convict labor increased, so did the convict population; there had to be a pipeline for labor.
6. Next, display the following quote: “Negro labor can be made exceedingly profitable in manufacturing iron, and in rolling mills provided [there is] an overseer – a southern man, who knows how to manage negroes.” — John T. Milner
7. Have students respond to the quote by asking them to note any similarities between the use of blacks in forced labor after the Civil War and the use of blacks in pre-Civil War slavery.
8. Based on the film clip and discussions, instruct students to create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts slave labor in the South before the Civil War and convict leasing after the Civil War. Have them consider similarities and differences in working conditions, purpose, operation, impact, and freedoms.
9. Allow students to share their lists to create a class Venn diagram that combines students’ answers. Encourage students to make the connection between the use of labor in slavery and its subsequent demise with the rise of convict leasing and industrialization, the accompanying rise in the prison population, and the use of convict labor by industrialists like John T. Milner. Also discuss the role that profit and economics played in both labor systems.
10. Have students write a short reflection essay that responds to the following quote from *Slavery by Another Name*:

“And this [convict leasing] system is one that I think in many ways needs to be understood as brutal in a social sense, but fiendishly rational in an economic sense. Because where else could one take a black worker and work them literally to death, after slavery? And when that worker died, one simply had to go and get another convict.” — Adam Green, historian

ACTIVITY: CHILDREN AS LABOR

Materials

- Juvenile Convicts Image
 - Letter from Carrie Kinsey (Transcript)
Carrie Kinsey wrote a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt to inquire about her fourteen-year-old brother who was promised a job, but instead was sold into forced labor. She asked for help to free her brother.
1. Prepare to view “Reflections on Child Convicts” by facilitating a discussion using the pre-viewing questions. Provide students with background on the clip. After viewing, facilitate a discussion using the post-viewing questions.
 2. Next, project “Juvenile Convicts Image.” While students view the image, have them free-write about what they see and feel. Explain that child labor was another labor supply that was utilized by some industrialists and business owners. Mention that the working conditions that child laborers were subjected to were often horrid.
 3. Distribute “Letter from Carrie Kinsey.” Have students read the letter independently. Continue the discussion about the use of children and teenagers in forced labor systems.
 4. Have students write a letter from the perspective of Carrie Kinsey’s brother that responds to her letter and details how he was forced into labor. To put students into his shoes, ask:
 - a. How would you feel if you were taken away from your family?
 - b. How would you feel being shackled and chained at fourteen years old and forced to work?
 - c. How would you feel if you had no clue when you would be freed and allowed to return to your family and the life you once knew?
 5. Have students share their letters with the class.

ACTIVITY: LABOR NOW

Materials

- “13 Products Most Likely to be Made by Child or Forced Labor” by Ryan McCarthy
Huffington Post, December 18, 2010
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/18/child-labor-products_n_798601.html#s210960&title=13 Carpets](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/18/child-labor-products_n_798601.html#s210960&title=13%20Carpets)
 - Slavery Footprint
<http://www.slaveryfootprint.org>
1. As a class, define exploitation. Have students consider ways that labor has been and continues to be exploited.
 2. Tell students that the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that there are 115 million children worldwide who are exploited and trapped in forced labor systems. As a class, review the slideshow at “13 Products Most Likely to be Made by Child or Forced Labor.”
 3. Next, have students visit “Slavery Footprint,” which allows them to complete a quick survey to find out the estimated number of forced laborers (including children) who were likely to be involved in creating and manufacturing the products that they buy.
 4. Have students prepare a multimedia presentation that highlights the use of child labor in forced labor across history, including modern day. If technology is available, encourage students to use an online platform like Prezi (www.prezi.com) or Glogster (www.glogster.com) to create presentations that include video, audio, photos, and text. Students can refer to sources used throughout this guide as well as new sources that they come across in additional research.
 5. To accompany their presentations, have students write a one-page persuasive essay that argues why forced labor, in any form, should no longer be practiced anywhere in the world. Initiate a discussion about persuasion and the elements of persuasive writing.
 6. Have students share their presentations and essays with the class.

MULTIMEDIA CLIPS

Reflections on Birmingham

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/convict-leasing/video-reflections-birmingham/>

The following excerpt is from a StoryCorps oral history that features Martha Bouyer, a Birmingham native, who talks about how the rapid growth of the city was spurred by cheap and forced labor. She talks about Sloss Furnaces, a major producer of pig iron (an ingredient necessary for the production of steel) from the 1880s through World War II. She also discusses how the natural resources of the city helped in its industrialization.

Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. What comes to mind when you think about labor?
2. How would you describe labor's role in the development of America?
3. What was meant by free labor?
4. What is meant by cheap labor? Are you familiar with any current debates about cheap labor?

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. Why was there a need for cheap labor in Birmingham?
2. What was the impact of the use of cheap labor in industries in Birmingham?
3. How did clacker tie people to working with Sloss?
4. What labor needs exist in our city?

A New Labor Force

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/classrooms/history/>

This film clip from *Slavery by Another Name* discusses the rise of convict leasing, a legal practice used by Southern states, and the system's profitability. It also highlights the rise of industrialists like John T. Milner who helped to trigger development in Birmingham, but who also, as a former slaverholder, replaced slaves with convicts as the major labor force in his operations and exposed these forced laborers to horrid working conditions.

Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. What is meant by the term the New South? What differentiated the New South from the Old South?

2. Have you ever seen incarcerated men or women working outside of prison? If so, what were they doing?

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. Why did industrialists like Milner use forced labor from the convict leasing system?
2. Describe the working conditions in which convicts were forced to work.
3. Do you know of any modern day examples of forced labor?

The Economics of Labor

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/labor-types/video-economics-labor/>

This video clip discusses the economic rationale behind forced labor after the Civil War as the South moved towards industrialization.

Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. What role does labor play in economics?
2. What did industrialization require?

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. Compare the pros and cons of free labor versus convict labor in the industrial development of the South after the Civil War.
2. What was the connection between controlling blacks after Emancipation and the use of forced labor?

Reflections on Child Convicts

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/convict-leasing/video-reflections-child-convict-labor/>

This video clip discusses the use of children in forced labor, which was a common practice. Children were exposed to the same harsh working conditions as adults, especially during the emergence of industrialization. This clip also discusses the racial inequalities that existed between the use of black children versus white children in labor camps.

Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. Have you heard of any ways that children have been forced to work? If so, how?

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think children were used in forced labor?
2. What do you think were the motivations of the judge who convicted the black child to the harsh sentence? Do you think this type of bias still happens today?
3. What are ways to protect children from being used in forced labor?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor | U.S. Department of Labor
<http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/pdf/2010TVPRA.pdf>

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens (available as a free e-book) | Google EBookstore
http://books.google.com/ebooks?id=5btEAAAAYAAJ&dq=oliver%20twist&as_brr=5&source=webstore_bookcard

Oliver Twist in the Classroom | Masterpiece Theater
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/oliver Twist/teachers_guide.html

U.S. Cracks Down on Child Labor | Change.org
<http://news.change.org/stories/us-cracks-down-on-child-labor-in-america>

Africa Adds to Miserable Ranks of Child Workers | *New York Times*
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/24/world/africa/24zambia.html?pagewanted=all>

Understanding Bonded Child Labor in Asia | The CWA Task Force on Bonded Child Labour
http://www.crin.org/docs/CWA_%20UnderstandingBondedChildLabour.pdf

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards

Reading Standards for Literacy in History and the Social Studies
Standards 1 to 3: Key Ideas and Details
Standards 7 to 9: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
<http://www.corestandards.org/>

IRA/NCTE National Standards for the English Language Arts

Standard 1; Standard 3; Standard 7; Standard 8
<http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Books/Sample/StandardsDoc.pdf>

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments
<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards>

National Standards for History

ERA 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870–1900)

Standard 2A; Standard 2B; Standard 3A

<http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/>

Historical Thinking Standards

Standard 1; Standard 2; Standard 5

<http://nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/historical-thinking-standards-1/overview>

NAME: _____

DATE: _____ SECTION: _____

Investigation: A City Is Born

Directions: After viewing “Reflections on Birmingham” complete this chart summarizing factors that contributed to Birmingham’s rise as an industrialized city and the impact that those factors had on the city’s growth.

FACTOR	IMPACT

JUVENILE CONVICTS



Courtesy of Detroit Publishing Company

Letter by Carrie Kinsey Letter (Transcript)

Bainbridge, Georgia, July 26, 1903.

Mr. President, I have a brother about 14 years old. A colored man came here and hired him from me, and said that he would take good care of him, and pay me five dollars a month for him—and I heard of him no more. He went and sold him to McRee, and they has been working him in prison for 12 months and I has tried to get them to send him to me and they won't let him go. He has no mother and no father. They are both dead, and I am his only friend and they won't let me have him. He has not done nothing for them to have him in chains, so I write to you for you to help me get my poor brother. His name is James Robinson. And the man that carried him off, his name is Dan Cal. He sold him to McCree at Valdosta, Georgia. Please let me hear from you at once.

Carrie Kinsey

[Note: This transcript has been edited slightly.]