

Life in the Southern Colonies

Slavery and Society

- 1 For more than 300 years, traders brought millions of Africans to North America, South America, and the Caribbean. These men, women, and children were taken from their homes, chained together in ships, and then sold.

Treatment of Enslaved People

- 2 The first Africans in the English colonies most likely arrived in Virginia in 1619. At first, the English colonies used indentured servants as workers. As more workers were needed, colonial governments made slavery legal. By the mid-1700s, slavery was legal in every colony. The laws said that children born to enslaved people were also enslaved. Families were often broken apart and sold to different owners.

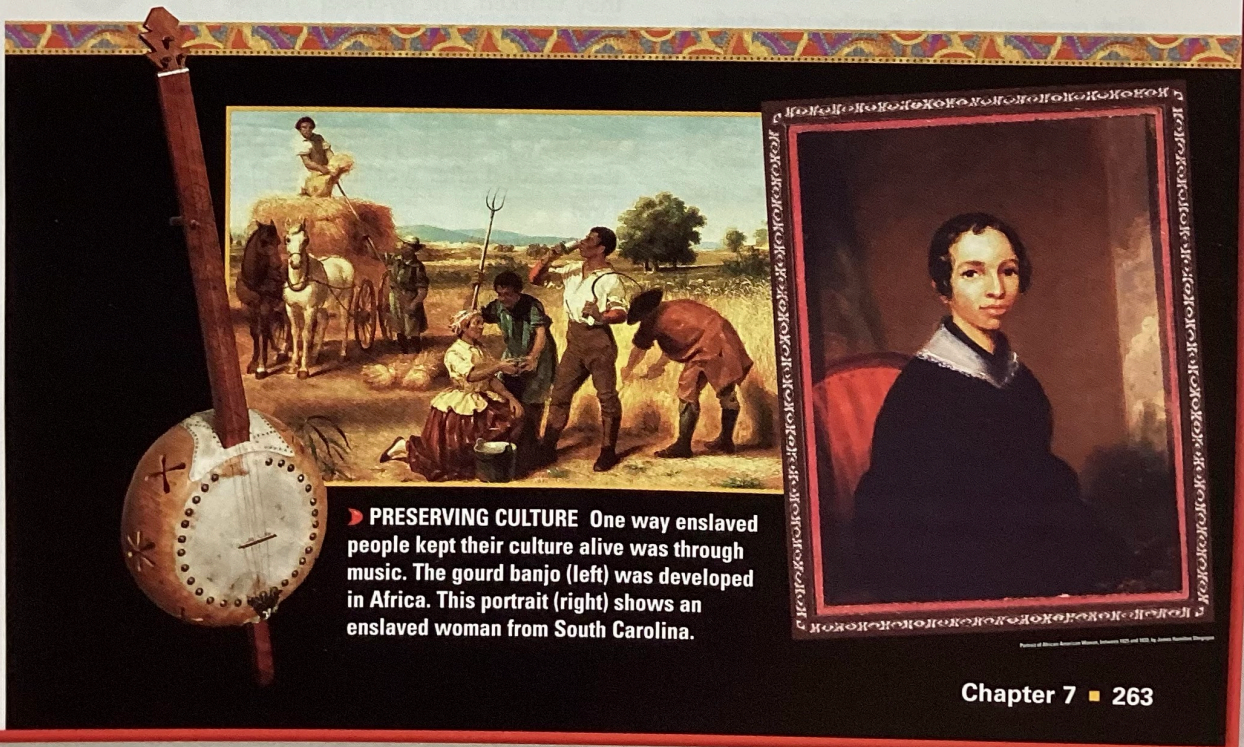
In the Southern Colonies, most enslaved Africans worked on plantations. The way enslaved people were treated depended on their owners. Enslaved people were often beaten and abused. It was very difficult to escape, but this did not stop enslaved people from trying.

Enslaved people were not free to speak out against slavery, but they still resisted it. Some rebelled. Others broke tools, pretended to be sick, or worked slowly. Punishment for such acts was often harsh.

Enslaved people tried to deal with their hardships by keeping their culture alive. They told stories and sang songs about Africa. By the late 1700s, the Christian religion also became a source of strength for some enslaved people.

READING CHECK ✨SUMMARIZE

How did enslaved people resist slavery?
they rebelled, broke tools, pretended to be sick, or worked slowly





A Farming Economy

The economy of the Southern Colonies was based mostly on plantations, which would not have been possible without the labor of enslaved people. The cash crops produced by enslaved workers made some **planters**, or plantation owners, the richest people in the Southern Colonies.

The Plantation System

The first plantations were built along the Coastal Plain. By 1750, settlers had moved west and started large plantations farther inland. As planters grew richer, the amount of land they owned also grew.

Some plantations looked like small villages. There were many buildings, including workshops where enslaved people made nails, bricks, barrels, and other items used on the plantation.

Plantation owners often hired an **overseer** to watch enslaved people as they worked. The overseer's house was often near the fields. Enslaved workers' houses were usually far away from the planter's house. Near their homes, some enslaved people kept small gardens that they tended after working the planter's land.

Planters ran the plantations, but they did not usually work on them. Enslaved people did the work. Planters sometimes worked for the community as judges or members of the colonial assembly. Many planters hired teachers to educate their children in the home. Enslaved children were not allowed to attend school. In fact, it was illegal for enslaved people to learn to read or write. Those who tried to learn had to do so in secret. They were punished if they were caught.

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A Southern Plantation

ILLUSTRATION Many plantations in the Southern Colonies were self-sufficient. Enslaved workers grew food and produced needed goods. Why did large plantations have so many buildings?

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Life on Small Farms

The economy of the Southern Colonies depended mostly on the crops from large plantations. However, most colonists lived and worked on small farms.

Former indentured servants often owned small farms. However, few ever became rich. Most owners of small farms did not own enslaved people. Those who did worked alongside their enslaved workers but did not treat them as equals.

Since small farms were often far away from each other, church services became major events. Some families traveled for hours to reach a church. There, they attended services and visited with other farm families.

READING CHECK **SUMMARIZE**

How did most colonists in the Southern Colonies make their living? by working on small farms

Free Africans

A few Africans were able to buy their freedom and start farms. However, most did not want to be part of the system of slavery. Some free Africans did buy relatives, but only to free them.

To escape slavery, many enslaved people ran away. Those who escaped were often caught and returned to their owners. Some found safety in **Spanish Florida** or were helped by Native American tribes.

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The Black Seminoles

The Seminole tribe gave runaways food and shelter. The Seminole also gave them land if they gave back one-third of the crop they raised on it. Many runaways dressed like the Seminole and learned their language. They became known as Black Seminoles.



► **SEEKING FREEDOM** Enslaved people who escaped often had to journey hundreds of miles to reach safety.

8 Fort Mose

Some free Africans in Spanish Florida started small towns, such as **Fort Mose** (moh•SAY). In 1738, it became the first settlement in North America for free Africans. The people of Fort Mose were free to practice African customs.

READING CHECK ✎ SUMMARIZE

Who were the Black Seminoles? runaway slaves who stayed with the Seminole and adopted their way of life

Summary

Life in the Southern Colonies was full of contrasts. Plantation owners were very rich, but they depended on enslaved Africans. On small farms, many former indentured servants struggled to make a living. Not all Africans were enslaved. Some bought their freedom or escaped.

REVIEW

- 1. WHAT TO KNOW** How did plantations affect life in the Southern Colonies?
- 2. VOCABULARY** Describe the role of a **planter** and the role of an **overseer**.
- 3. CULTURE** How did enslaved people keep their culture alive?
- 4. CRITICAL THINKING** Why was the economy of the Southern Colonies dependent on large plantations when most of the colonists worked on small farms?
- 5. DRAW A SCENE** Choose a scene from daily life in the Southern Colonies that you read about in this lesson. Then draw a picture of that scene, and write a caption describing what it shows about life in a Southern Colony.

- 6. FOCUS SKILL SUMMARIZE** On a separate sheet of paper, complete this graphic organizer.

