

## The Invention of the Cotton Gin in 1793

5. Prediction: Do you think the invention of the cotton gin resulted in the use of more or less slaves on the plantations in the 1800's? Why or why not?

### Read below to learn about Eli Whitney's invention, the cotton gin.

By 1800 or so, however, African American slavery was once again a thriving institution, especially in the Southern United States. One of the primary reasons for the reinvigoration of slavery was the invention and rapid widespread adoption of the cotton gin. This machine allowed Southern planters to grow a variety of cotton—short staple cotton—that was especially well suited to the climate of the Deep South. The bottle neck in growing this crop had always been the labor needed to remove the seeds from the cotton fibers. But Eli Whitney's gin made it much easier and more economical to do. This fact made cotton production much more profitable and hence very attractive to planters and farmers in the South. Still, growing cotton was very labor intensive and cotton growers needed a large supply of labor to tend the fields. African American slaves supplied this labor.

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/expref/slavery/slavery.html>



The First Cotton Gin

This illustration by William L. Sheppard from the December 18th, 1869 issue of Harper's Weekly depicts the first cotton gin with black slaves operating the gin while white landowners discuss the new invention in the background.

Date:

December 18, 1869

<http://www.picturehistory.com/product/id/1180>

6. What did the cotton gin do that made the growing of cotton easier and more **profitable** and **economical**?

After completing the reading above, do you need to adjust your prediction? \_\_\_\_\_