

AGRICULTURE ON THE BORDER

A CIVIL WAR GOVERNORS OF KENTUCKY TEACHING THEME

CONTEXT

Studying agricultural practices allows us to understand how people provided the food and cash crops they needed to support themselves and their society. Both before and during the Civil War, the southern United States grew such cash crops as cotton, rice, sugar cane, tobacco and indigo, a plant used to make blue dye. Large plantations were part of the southern landscape, especially in the region known as the Deep South (Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, Texas, Louisiana and Florida).

Kentucky grew different crops. For export outside of the commonwealth, Kentuckians raised hemp, working livestock, meat animals, wood, and tobacco. They grew corn and wheat for internal use.

Although the Kentucky landscape did not support as many large plantations as the landscape of Deep South states did, Kentucky agriculture was deeply tied to and invested in slavery. Individual slaveholdings were smaller on average than elsewhere in the South, but a larger percentage of Kentucky households participated in the institution than did in most other states in the region.

PRIMARY SOURCES

- [J. M. Mills, J. S. Hayes, and J. H. Garrard, Report](#)
- [J. B. Bowman et al. to Thomas E. Bramlette](#)
- [T. J. McGibben to J. G. Foster](#)
- [John W. Brookover to Unknown](#)

BIG-PICTURE QUESTIONS

- Why were some crops restricted during wartime?
- Why is there an increase in one crop while there is a decrease in another?
- How do these agricultural wartime decisions impact Kentucky long term?

SECONDARY LITERATURE

- [Food, Farming, and the Domestic Economy in Kentucky](#)
- Ellen Eslinger. 2009. "Farming on the Kentucky Frontier." *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 107 (1): 3–32.
- Karl B. Raitz and Nancy O'Malley. 2012. *Kentucky's Frontier Highway: Historical Landscapes along the Maysville Road*. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky.

ACTIVITIES

Civil War Farmville*: Farming is a challenging occupation, but it was made even more challenging by war. This activity will help students understand the different factors that contributed to success or failure during the Civil War.

- Divide the class into groups of four to five students. This will mimic small neighborhoods and allow them to see how their neighbors fared each year.
- Provide each group with four sets of cards (front/back and cut apart)
- Allow 15 to 20 minutes for actual play.
- Game instructions and game sheets are on pages 8 and 9. An game example is on page 10.
- After students have played the game, have them reflect on these questions: What crops did you select, and why? How did your crop selection affect your farm during year one? How did year two compare? How would you approach the game next time?

*Access the game in the link above

