

# AGRICULTURE ON THE BORDER

A CIVIL WAR GOVERNORS OF KENTUCKY TEACHING THEME  
BY EMILY MOSES

## 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 slave-holdings 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.

\*Access the game in the link above

At the end of game play have students complete a **Farming Reflection**. Write a 1–2 page response to the following 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?