

Additional Vocabulary and Comprehension Questions

Q: How did Eli Whitney's friend encourage him? [pages 5-16]

A: he reminded him of the skills he did have and encouraged him to just keep going; that if he did, he'd be a great man

Q: How were muskets made? [pages 5-16]

A: they were not mass-produced, but were handmade; so no parts were interchangeable

Q: What skills did Eli Whitney have? [pages 17-33]

A: ciphering, mechanics, working with his hands

Q: Were his talents appreciated? [pages 17-33]

A: no, his father felt they were a waste

Q: What was odd about Eli Whitney's education? [pages 17-33]

A: Eli Whitney entered Yale at twenty-three, long after most boys graduated

Q: What differences about the South surprised Eli Whitney? [pages 34-39]

A: the weather was really different, even though it was fall it was really hot and muggy; the trees didn't lose their leaves; people tried to make him feel welcome even when they didn't know him.

Q: What surprise waited for him? [pages 34-39]

A: the job he expected didn't pay nearly enough

Q: How did Catherine Greene prove to be a good friend? [pages 34-39]

A: she provided Eli Whitney with a home; time to figure out what he was going to do; encouragement when he helped her; an idea for work; and the first investor in the idea she believed that he could do

Q: What does Cade say about building the cotton gin? [pages 50-62]

A: that it would be easy; it was simple after having the idea

Q: How did Eli Whitney Whitney help the farmers in the South? [pages 63-83]

A: he made their land suddenly profitable and fertile in its own way

Q: Why did it take a long time to make each gin? [pages 63-83]

A: each piece had to be made individually, measured and remeasured to make sure it would fit

Q: What happened because of the yellow fever? [pages 63-83]

A: It meant Eli Whitney didn't have a patent to protect his business when someone stole the gin to copy it

The first year Eli Whitney invented the gin, America produced five million pounds of cotton—all on pirated machines.

Q: Why were people willing to use the pirated gins? [pages 84-98]

A: the gins helped productivity so much that they "needed" them to make a profit, they felt they didn't have any options

Q: What setback did Eli Whitney face after an already rough year? [pages 84-98]

A: a fire burned his factory down; all of the current work was lost

Q: What came out of Eli Whitney's meeting with John Morrow? [pages 99-117]

A: he was glad to have someone tell him honestly how the sales of the gin could be improved; though the man was angry Eli Whitney could see the truth in what he said

Q: Even through his anger, what was John Morrow willing to concede?
[pages 99-117]

A: that he was better off

Q: What happens to Eli Whitney's expectations? [pages 118-132]

A: each step of the way he is foiled; sickness takes one vendor's life; others aren't able to work because of weather; even though they want to be dependable, workers can't because they can't work either

Q: How did Thomas Jefferson save Eli Whitney's contract with the government? [pages 133-150]

A: he had seen a similar idea earlier and thought it made sense; he encouraged the men to not give up their time and investment just because it took longer to start than they thought; in the end, he felt he should stand by Whitney

Q: Why did Napoleon Bonaparte sell the Louisiana Territory? [pages 151-170]

A: because his army in the West Indies died swiftly of yellow fever, thus Napoleon knew he could not fight and conquer

Q: How long did it take for Eli Whitney to get the patent on the gin? [pages 151-170]

A: sixty court battles and thirteen years

Q: Did the patent help him? [pages 171-178]

A: the profits from the gin came in for a year, but then his patent expired and Congress refused to grant an extension; the profits only covered his debts

Vocabulary

Portmanteau: a large suitcase.

Q: Why did Eli Whitney build homes for his workers? [pages 179-192]

A: to give them all a bit of earth; to give them something that working with machines stole

Q: Were Eli Whitney's struggles worth it? [pages 179-192]

A: yes; in the end he was rewarded, he was able to relax with his family and helped change the whole direction of the country