

Below is an excerpt from the narrative of Solomon Northrup, an ex-slave who worked on a cotton plantation. Read this excerpt and then write a one-paragraph response to the question at the bottom of the page.

Excerpt:

"The hands are required to be in the cotton field as soon as it is light in the morning, and, with the exception of ten or fifteen minutes, which is given them at noon to swallow their allowance of cold bacon, they are not permitted to be a moment idle until it is too dark to see, and when the moon is full, they often times labor till the middle of the night. They do not dare to stop even at dinner time, nor return to the quarters, however late it be, until the order to halt is given by the driver."

"The day's work over in the field, the baskets are 'toted,' or in other words, carried to the gin-house, where the cotton is weighed. No matter how fatigued and weary he may be – no matter how much he longs for sleep and rest – a slave never approaches the gin-house with his basket of cotton but with fear. If it falls short in weight – if he has not performed the full task appointed of him, he knows that he must suffer. And if he has exceeded it by ten or twenty pounds, in all probability his master will measure the next day's task accordingly. So, whether he has too little or too much, his approach to the gin-house is always with fear and trembling." – Solomon Northrup, Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northrup (Auburn, NY, 1853).

Source: http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=43

Question: How do you think the cotton gin affected the lives of slaves working on cotton plantations?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.