

Farming Cotton

Background:

The book takes place in the early 1930s. Most people made a living off the land, however now they are being forced to attain other jobs to make a living and afford the necessities for their family:

The Landing nevertheless produced everything required to sustain life except
ice, wheat flour, and articles of clothing (P. 4)

There was a time when cotton was not worth growing (P. 6).

The Cunninghams are country folks, farmers, and the crash hit them hardest (P. 27).

Atticus said professional people were poor because the farmers were poor (P. 27).

Mr. Cunningham would rather go hungry than sell his land (P. 27-28).

I want to know why you bringin' white chillun to nigger church (P. 158).

You ain't got no business bringin' white chillun here- they got their church, we
got our'n (P. 158).

Living off the land became harder to do. People needed more than what they could grow on their farm. Farmers had to grow enough cotton, vegetables, or fruit on their land to make a profit. The farmers need workers to help with the land, it was too much to do on their own. Most farm owners were Caucasian and they hired African Americans to work the fields. Caucasians and African Americans were socially separated. It was looked down upon for a Caucasian to befriend an African American. The price of cotton was around \$0.20 per pound. There are around 500 pounds in a bale of cotton. A farmer is able to get 1.3 bales of cotton per acre.

Part 1: If Mr. Cunningham has 2.7 acres of land.

a.) How many bales of cotton could it produce?

b.) How much could he make?

Par 2: If takes around 180 days for cotton to grow. If Mr. Cunningham pays his workers \$0.25 a day.

a.) How much money would it cost Mr. Cunningham to pay 5 workers?

b.) How much profit would he have left after he paid his workers?

Part 3:

a.) If you were Mr. Cunningham, would you do it yourself or pay workers?

b.) Should Mr. Cunningham hire African American workers and risk downfall socially?
Explain.

Part 4: Would you keep the farm? Explain why or why not.

Cotton Answer Key

- 1.) A.) 3.51 bales of cotton
B.) \$351
- 2.) A.) \$225
B.) \$126
- 3.) A.) Do it yourself to make more money, or pay workers to help
B.) Answers Vary
- 4.) Answers Vary