

“Cotton Gin” Curriculum-Based Readers Theatre Script

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- 1 This is a story about the invention of...
ALL THE COTTON GIN.
2 And how it created tensions...
3 between the North and the South...
4 tensions that led to...
ALL THE CIVIL WAR.
5 The year is 1793...
6 And...in the South...
7 some white plantation owners
8 are frustrated.
ALL {Gesture & Sound Effect}
9 They complain to each other.
Boys WE USED TO MAKE GOOD
MONEY RAISING TOBACCO.
Girls BUT ALL THOSE YEARS OF
PLANTING HAS WORN OUT
THE SOIL.
10 These white plantation owners
all agree...
**ALL WE NEED TO FIND ANOTHER
CROP! {Gesture}**
11 The South has lots of cotton.
12 England *needs* cotton... for its new
textile factories.
13 There’s just one problem.
ALL WHAT IS IT? {Gesture}
14 The cotton that grows in the
American South...
15 takes too long to *clean*.
16 The Southern cotton...
**ALL HAS STICKY SEEDS IN IT
{Gesture}**
17 And it takes forever to *separate*
the seeds from the cotton.
ALL THOSE DARN SEEDS! {Gesture}
18 Picking out the cotton seeds
takes *so long*...
19 that the Southern planters
20 can’t make a *profit* with cotton.
21 But then, in 1793.....
22 an inventor named Eli Whitney
solves the problem.
- ALL WAIT A SECOND! {Gesture}**
23 *Who*is Eli Whitney?
24 He was a young man ...who...
25 even when he was a little boy...
26 was interested in how things worked.
1 He was always taking apart
clocks and watches.
ALL ER, ER, ER {Gesture}
2 That probably didn’t go over too well
with his parents.
ALL ELI! {Gesture}
3 So anyway, when Eli grew up
4 and was 28 years old...
5 He visited a plantation in Georgia.
6 And he heard a bunch of plantation
owners say...
**ALL WE NEED A FASTER WAY TO
CLEAN COTTON! {Gesture}**
7 Eli started thinking.
ALL Hmmm. {Gesture}
8 And thenEli sawa *cat*.
ALL MEOW. {Gesture}
9 And a chicken.
**ALL BAWK-BAWK-BAWK.
{Gesture}**
10 The chicken was behind a fence.
11 The cat used its claws and sharp teeth
to try to *get* the chicken.
ALL {Gesture & Sound Effect}
12 But all the cat gotwas feathers.
ALL {Gesture & Sound Effect}
13 Thatgave Eli an idea.
ALL DING! {Gesture}
14 And he created
ALL THE COTTON GIN.
15 Eli’s cotton gin had sharp *teeth*...
made of wire.
16 Hey, kind of like the cat’s teeth,
17 But instead of pulling out *feathers*...
18 The teeth of the cotton gin
pulled out *cotton*
19 and left the seeds behind.

5 Was it faster than cleaning it by hand?
ALL DUH! {Gesture}
 20 This new invention ...cleaned cotton
ALL FIFTY TIMES FASTER.
 21 It was a simple machine
 22 that could be turned with a crank.
ALL {Gesture & Sound Effect}
 23 Eli Whitney's cotton gin
 delighted the plantation owners
 and farmers of the South.
ALL YAY! {Gesture}
NOW WE CAN MAKE
MONEY! {Gesture}
 24 Within ten years, cotton
 production...
ALL SKYROCKETED! {Gesture}
 25 The Southern cotton planters
 got rich.
ALL CHA-CHING! {Gesture}
 26 And Southern cotton became
 America's number one export!
ALL COTTON IS KING! {Gesture}
 1 So.....was Eli Whitney a hero?
ALL YES {Gesture}.....
AND NO {Gesture}
 2 He was a hero to the plantation
 owners...who were making money.
 3 But Eli's invention of the cotton
 gin was *terrible* for the people
 who had to *pick* the cotton.
ALL THE SLAVES. {cross wrists}
 4 *Before* the cotton gin was invented...
 5 Slavery seemed to be on the
 decline.
 6 A few tobacco planters in the
 Chesapeake Bay area had *freed*
 their slaves.
ALL I'M FREE! {Gesture}
 7 But the invention of the
 cotton gin ...*revived slavery*...
ALL {Gesture & Sound Effect}
 8 And made slavery stronger.

ALL {Gesture}
 9 Now that the South could produce *more*
 cotton...
 10 cotton plantations needed more *workers*.
 11 The result...
ALL THE ECONOMY OF THE SOUTH
BECAME *DEPENDENT*...
ON SLAVE LABOR.
 12 The cotton gin also...
ALL SPREAD SLAVERY {GESTURE}
 13 into the Deep South and Texas.
 14 When the cotton gin was invented...
ALL THERE WERE ONLY SIX SLAVE
STATES.
 15 But by 1850....
ALL THERE WERE FIFTEEN SLAVE
STATES.
 16 So it sounds like the cotton gin...
 17 may not have been such a good idea.
ALL MMMN...UNH-UNH {Gesture}
 18 The economy of the South became totally
 based on cotton.
ALL COTTON, COTTON,
COTTON! {Gesture}
 19 And the resulting spread of slavery
 20 led to tensions...
ALL GRRR {2 halves turn to face center}
 21 between the North and South.
 22 A lot of Northerners said...
 N SLAVERY IS WRONG {Gesture}
 AND SHOULD BE ABOLISHED
 {Gesture}
 23 But a lot of Southerners said...
 S WE NEED SLAVERY {Gesture}
 IT'S THE BACKBONE OF OUR
 ECONOMY. {Gesture}
 24 These tensions led....
 25 to the outbreak of...
ALL THE CIVIL WAR
{hum few bars of song/ march}
 26 But ...that's...
ALL ANOTHER STORY. {Gesture}