

Sharecropping Worksheet

DIRECTIONS: The purpose of this activity is to simulate the life of a sharecropping family.



Phase One: This section is the simulation set up. Review the definition of a sharecropper, the goal of sharecropping and speculate on why Freedmen and poor whites were willing to become sharecroppers.

Definition

Sharecropper: A tenant farmer especially in the southern US who is provided with credit for seed, tools, living quarters, and food, who works the land, and who receives an agreed share of the value of the crop minus charges

Goal of a Sharecropper

As a sharecropper your goal is to GET OUT OF SHARECROPPING! You aim to rent your own land so that you have more control over your profits. One day you even dream of owning your own land.

Predict:

Why would poor whites and freedmen become sharecroppers?



Phase Two: Family and Land- During the simulation, your group will become your Sharecropping family. Together you will all be struggling to earn enough money to leave Sharecropping and become a tenant farmer!

► **1.** What will the last name of your family be? Remember that most former slaves had taken the last name of their original master. *The oldest person in group gets to decide the last name.* Write down your last name and the names of all family members below.

Your family's last name is _____.

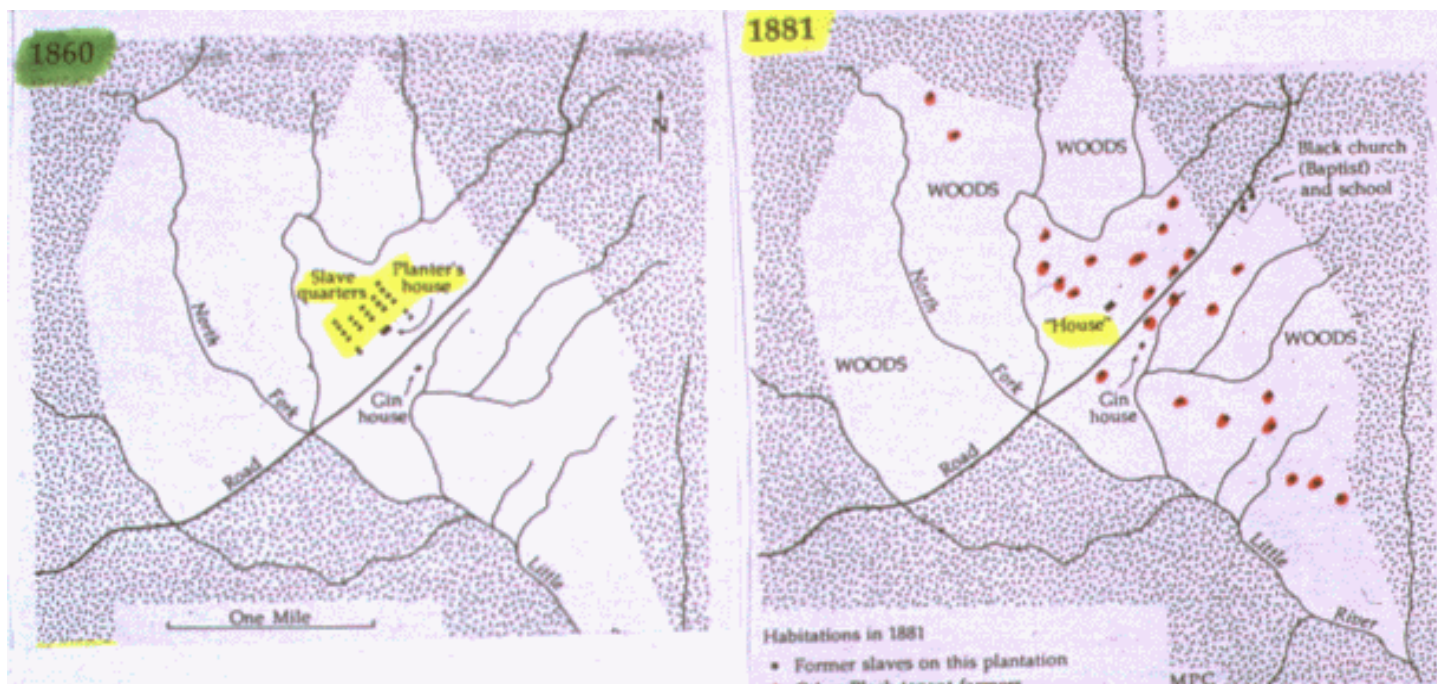
Family Members: (list names in table)	

► **2. Need a Home???** Look at the maps below. The map on the left shows where you and your family used to work and live before the Civil War.

First surprise... You and your family still live on the plantation! Good news is that you will be able to choose the house where you would like to live. Look at the map on the right, and decide what house you will live in, in 1881. Next, answer the following:

- A. Circle the house you wish to live in.
- B. Why did you choose the house you did?

Note: Houses are marked by small black dots.



► **3.** *The youngest member of the family, having spent the most time in the Freedmen's Schools should read this paragraph aloud:*

"In the post-Civil War Era, many former slaves like yourself choose to stay on the plantation and work the land in the role of Sharecropper. You and your family are ready to begin your new life as a Sharecropper. You and your family will be growing cotton and corn. You have borrowed some money from the plantation owner to pay for your first seed and use of tools. You are excited at the prospects of earning a living as a free person and look forward to the day when you can earn enough money to rent the land outright. As a sharecropper, you have to give over half your crop to the plantation owner for use of land and fees.



Phase Three: Growing Crops and Hoping for a Profit-- You and your family have established yourself as Sharecroppers on the Barrow Plantation. During this phase, you will be attempting to earn enough money to become a tenant farmer.

INSTRUCTIONS:

You are entering into a 4-year contract as sharecroppers. Your goal is to make enough money to, at the end of that 4 years, move on to become a tenant farmer. Look at the chart on the following page. You are all starting each year with -2 dollars in **debt**. That is your “rent” of sorts to your landowner.

The **soil/climate factor** is the next column. You just chose a plot of land, now let’s hope that you chose well and that you got good soil! Choose one person on your team to roll the dice for soil. This soil factor will stay the same for all 4 years. (Once they roll, look at what that # on the die means in terms of soil #/quality. Record that number in all 4 years.)

Now each team will work on your own to see how you make out year to year in terms of **profit margin** and **surprises**. With each roll, have one member of your team read out what happens to your family that year and then record the cost/gain in the column. PLEASE DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP! You will be asked to share what actions impacted your family’s success or struggles so you need to know the explanation behind the numbers.

Once you have tallied all 4 years, figure out your grand total.

When you have your grand total, move on to “Phase 4” and go from there.

► **1.** You will keep track of your profits and losses as a sharecropping family over a four-year period. Use this chart to keep track.

	Debt Owed	Soil/Climate Factor	Profit Margin based on Market Prices	Surprises	Yearly Totals
	(This is debt you have already accrued.)	(Teams roll only ONCE! Write the same number for all spaces. See directions on Quality of Soil handout.)	(Different rolls for each year. Teams must roll once for each of the 4 years . See directions on Profit Margin handout.)	(Different rolls for each year. Teams must roll once for each of the 4 years . See directions on Surprise handout.)	(Add each of the year rows across)
1866	-2				
1867	-2	(same as above)			
1868	-2	(same as above)			
1869	-2	(same as above)			
Grand Total:					

Quality of Soil

So, how's that plot of land you picked out? **ROLL THE DICE ONCE!** This roll symbolizes the quality of soil on your "share" of the land. If you roll a 1, write a number -3 in the soil column for all four years. If you roll a 2, write a -2 in all four years.

Roll Number	Soil Quality
1	-3
2	-2
3	-1
4	0
5	+1
6	+2



► **2.** Make sure everything you have done so far is recorded on your sharecropping worksheet. Next you will find out what type of life you have earned for yourself.

Phase Four: Judgment Day

► **1.** Complete the yearly totals on the chart and then complete the calculations below.

The number in your grand total is in **dollars**. (-3 is -\$3.00... +2 is \$2.00 etc...)

Write the total dollar amount earned over the course of your four year contract here: \$_____.

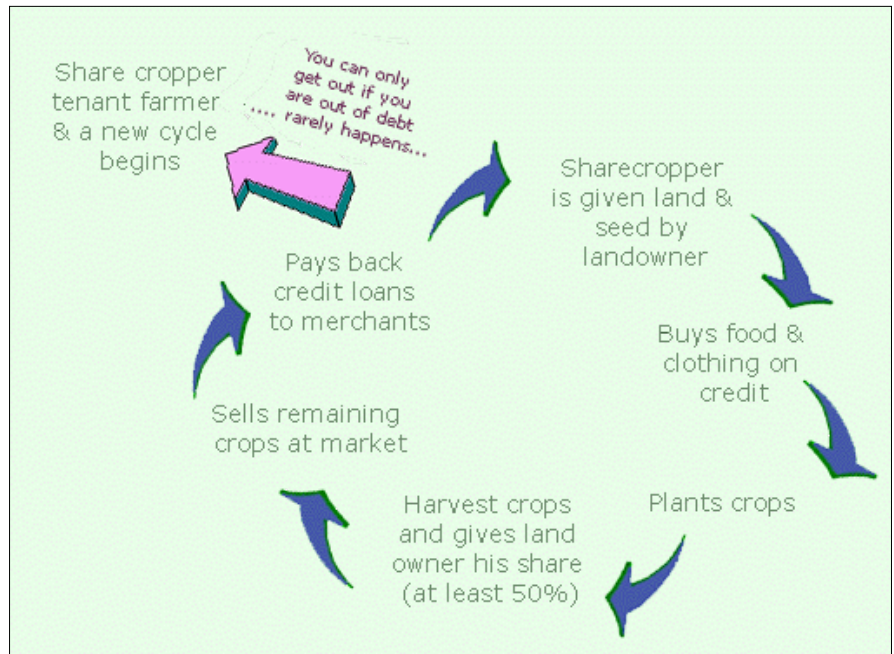
► **2.** What types of “surprises” impacted your family’s progress positively or negatively over your four-year contract?

Positive surprises	Negative surprises

► **3.** Did you make enough money to live the lifestyle you want? Are you able to leave sharecropping and become a tenant farmer? Have you saved up enough money to move, however poor and penniless, to the city? What option will you choose and why?

► **3.** Look at the Sharecropping Cycle of Poverty Graphic located below. Then answer the following:

How did sharecropping help or hinder Freedmen in achieving their goals?



► **4.** As a group look at the "Worse Than Bondage" cartoon located below. The author of the cartoon clearly felt that freedom and life as a sharecropper was worse than Slavery. **What do you think?**



► **5.** Drawing off of what you now know about life as a sharecropper, please complete the table below:

Sharecropping- Advantages over Slavery	Sharecropping - Disadvantages over Slavery