

Indigo in South Carolina

In the 1600s and 1700s, Charleston, South Carolina, was an important port for the trading of rice, tobacco, and indigo. While most people could easily explain the first two products, most have no idea what indigo is, other than a dark blue color.

Indigo is a dark blue dye that can be made from the "peas" of certain tropical plants. Indigo was used to dye clothes blue. It was very valuable to plantation owners and farmers in South Carolina because it could grow on land that was not suited for tobacco or rice. Indigo would prove to be South Carolina's second most valuable crop. Some called it "blue gold." Over time, however, indigo production in South Carolina declined. After the Revolutionary War, English merchants started getting indigo from India. South Carolina farmers, however, weren't too sad. They soon turned their attention to growing a far more valuable crop --- cotton.

1. Which was not a crop grown in South Carolina?

- A. tobacco
- B. corn
- C. cotton
- D. rice

2. Why do you think indigo was called "blue gold"?

- A. Because it has blues and gold in it
- B. Because there were different kinds of plants that could be used to make indigo
- C. Because it was blue; and valuable like gold
- D. Because English merchants began getting it from India

3. Why was indigo such a valuable crop to farmers?

- A. Because it could only be grown on land with tobacco
- B. Because it could only be grown on land in which tobacco and rice were already being grown
- C. Because it could be grown on land that tobacco and rice could not be grown on
- D. Because people in India wanted it

4. Which is true?

- A. South Carolina farmers were upset that English merchants began getting indigo from India
- B. Indigo was less valuable as a crop to South Carolina farmers than tobacco and cotton
- C. After the Revolutionary War, English merchants began buying cotton in India
- D. South Carolina merchants turned to growing cotton after English merchants began getting indigo from India.