

"The Economy That Slavery Built"



A GUIDE TO LISTENING WITH CHILDREN

1619 is a New York Times audio series hosted by journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, who created The 1619 Project initiative for The New York Times Magazine. You can find more information about the podcast along with transcripts for listening at [nytimes.com/1619podcast](https://www.nytimes.com/1619podcast). Episode two explores how the institution of slavery helped to turn a young and poor nation into a global economic leader. This episode includes some scenes of graphic violence, which we identify in the guide.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE LISTENING

- What is an economy? What do you know about the economics in the US?
- Some of the history & personal stories told in this podcast are hard to listen to because they describe painful events. What can we do to take care of ourselves when something is both important & difficult to listen to?

BEGINNINGS OF THE COTTON ECONOMY

6:20-15:05

(Some graphic descriptions of violence)

- How did the invention of the cotton gin influence the economy, the treatment of enslaved people, & the treatment of Native Americans?
- What connections do Matthew Desmond & Nikole Hannah-Jones draw between the techniques for managing labor & productivity on slave plantations & in modern corporations?

THE PANIC OF 1837

19:57-25:57

- Have you previously heard of the Panic of 1837? What about the economic crisis in the late 2000s? What comparisons do Desmond & Hannah-Jones draw between the two? Does their analysis make sense to you?
- What is the conclusion Desmond ultimately comes to about American capitalism?

NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES, PERSONAL ANECDOTE

0:00-6:20

(Section describes the murder of Emmett Till)

- Does Nikole Hannah Jones' Aunt Charlotte remind you of anyone in your own life?
- What are some of the things the Tallahatchie River (and rivers in general) represent in this story? Where else have you seen similar symbolism?

CONNECTING BANKING TO SLAVERY

15:05-19:57

- Did you know the history of banks allowing plantation owners to take out mortgages on enslaved people? What questions & emotions does it bring up for you?
- Why was it hypocritical for global investors to buy slave-backed mortgage bonds in the United States while saying they oppose slavery?

JESMYN WARD POEM

25:57-31:56

(Some graphic descriptions of violence)

- Jesmyn Ward wrote this creative work in her imagining & responding to the 1808 Act prohibiting the importation of slaves. What does this demonstrate about how knowledge & research can inspire us to create?

AFTER LISTENING ACTIVITY

Research a current event related to business or the economy. Reflect on the impact this event has on every day people & create a piece of art to demonstrate that impact.