

# Chapter 9: Opening the Back Country

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## *Life in the Back Country of South Carolina*

**Objective:** To understand the plantation life that existed in South Carolina’s Back Country during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Standard:** *Indicator 8-1.5 — South Carolina’s colonial governments*  
*Indicator 8-1.6 — Economic prosperity in colonial times*  
*Indicator 8-2.5 — Internal tensions between the UpCountry and Lowcountry*

## **Bell-Ringer Activity**

During colonial times, the backcountry of South Carolina had very little formal government, and law was often kept by harsh vigilante groups. Ask your students to **write a letter** to the South Carolina General Assembly explaining the problem. The letter should be an attempt to persuade the Assembly to become more involved in establishing an organized government in the backcountry of South Carolina (*this was the focus of the “Regulator Movement” in the 1760s*).

## **Discussion Activity**

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, most of the men living in the Back Country of South Carolina were small farmers or traders. While most of these farmers barely grew enough to support themselves (*unlike the major plantation owners of the lowcountry*), they still had a great deal of pride in their agricultural roots. In fact, farming was considered the only respectable occupation for a gentlemen (*merchants, manufacturers, and other tradesmen were all looked down upon*).

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the vast majority of men living in South Carolina—and elsewhere in the South—were farmers. Ask your students to **brainstorm** what factors changed this trend, enabling more people to be fed by far less farmers. In fact, less than 2% of Americans still live on a farm.

### **Factors that have increased the output of the American farm**

- Fertilizers
- Pesticides
- Mechanized farming equipment
- Better techniques (*crop rotation, planting patterns, etc.*)
- Irrigation Systems
- Crop genetics
- Improved weed control and removal
- Advancements in food preservation

## **Language Arts Integration**

Ask your students to imagine that they are living in the Back Country of South Carolina during the early 1700s. Have each student write a **journal entry** describing one average day in his or her life. Make sure your students consider their **occupation, surroundings, financial situation, family, & education**.