

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Alabama**

Alabama is located in the southeastern part of the United States bordered by the states of Mississippi, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida. Alabama has a seacoast because a small part of the state touches the Gulf of Mexico. This location makes southern Alabama prone to hurricanes that blow across the gulf from the Atlantic Ocean. Otherwise Alabama's weather is typical of the southern U.S. with mild winters and hot, humid summers.

### **Alabama's History**

The area known today as Alabama was first explored by Europeans in the mid-1500s. Spaniard Hernando de Soto began conquering the southern areas of what is now the United States. His troops landed on the eastern coast of Florida and moved north and west, entering Choctaw Indian territory in Alabama in 1540. Choctaw Chief Tuscaloosa led the battle against the Spanish. As a result, the Spanish conquerors soon left the area.

It wasn't until the 1700s that Europeans returned to the area. French explorers established a fort on the Gulf of Mexico called La Mobile which evolved into the port city of Mobile. Mobile became the capital of French Louisiana but New Orleans was, even then, a more powerful port city. Spanish and French settlers brought new diseases to this area in North America which killed thousands of Native Americans who had no resistance to unfamiliar diseases.

After the Revolutionary War, part of Alabama was included in the Mississippi Territory while the Gulf Coast continued to be owned by Spain. In 1795, the state of Georgia illegally sold millions of acres of land in Alabama to speculators who in turn sold it to settlers. Within ten years the fertile Alabama land, especially in the south, was converted into huge cotton plantations tended by African slaves.

Alabama became a territory in 1817 and was admitted as a state in December 1819. The state seceded from the Union in 1861 at the beginning of the Civil War. Almost half the population of Alabama at the time was African slaves. The state capital of Montgomery became the capital of the Confederate States of America and tourists continue to visit the capital building known as the First White House of the Confederacy.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

One hundred years after the Civil War, during the 1960s, the cities of Montgomery and Selma were the sites of Civil Rights marches and protests as people fought for equal rights for black citizens.

After the Civil War, sharecropping, where tenant farmers tended the land for a portion of the profits, replaced the old plantation system. People were hopeful, but the sharecroppers did not fare much better than slaves. Alabama farmers relied solely on cotton as a cash crop. Every crop grown depleted the soil of nutrients, so by 1900 the fertile soil of Alabama was deteriorating. By 1915, boll weevils, insects that infest cotton, destroyed nearly the entire cotton crop, devastating the Alabama economy. As a result, hundreds of thousands of black citizens moved from Alabama to larger cities of the North like Chicago and New York. They moved in search of work and better living conditions. This great move is called the Great Migration.

### **Alabama Today**

Today about 4.5 million people live in Alabama, with most of the population clustered around the cities of Birmingham, Mobile and the state capital of Montgomery. However, these remain small cities with populations of about 200,000 each.

Alabama is known for producing a few different products. First, Alabama cultivates farm products and the top five agricultural products are chickens, cattle, eggs, plants for nurseries and cotton. Alabama farmers also produce farmed catfish, peanuts, sweet potatoes and pecans. Alabama does this despite the small size of its farms; half of Alabama's farms are less than 100 acres in size. Alabama is second in the nation in the production of timber. The state harvests pine, oak, hickory and ash trees which produce lumber for homes and furniture. Alabama was a major source of coal in the early 1900s and still contributes to fulfilling the nation's need for coal. Alabama continues to supply limestone, marble, sand and gravel from its quarries.

Alabama has also contributed to lunar exploration. The city of Huntsville in the northern part of the state is the location of the Marshall Space Flight Center which has made significant contributions to the International Space Station and lunar exploration. The U.S. Space and Rocket Center, a major museum operated by

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

NASA, is also located in Huntsville. Students from all over the country can attend Space Camp at the museum.

Today, Alabama has a solid industrial economy with more than 5,000 manufacturing and distribution centers owned by companies from over 20 countries. About 1 in 5 workers are employed in manufacturing jobs.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Circle True or False after analyzing each of the following statements.

1. True False Alabama shares a border with Louisiana.
2. True False The first known European explorer of the land in Alabama was Spanish conqueror Hernando de Soto.
3. True False Birmingham is the capital of Alabama.
4. True False Before the Civil War, almost half the population of Alabama was African slaves who tended large plantations.
5. True False Today, Alabama farmers are known for producing chickens and catfish.
6. True False Historically, Selma is famous as the location on Civil Rights marches in the 1960s.
7. True False The aerospace industry and NASA are important to the economy of Alabama.
8. True False A study of educational achievement conducted in 2007 found that Alabama students were lagging behind the rest of the United States.
9. True False The Marshall Space Flight Center located in Huntsville is a museum and location of Space Camp.
10. True False Alabama is an important source of timber for homes and furniture.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Answers

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. True
8. True
9. False
10. True