Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____
Advanced Placement United States History Mr. Gallucci

GEORGE FITZHUGH, "THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE SOUTH"
A DEFENSE OF SOUTHERN SOCIETY (1854)

Questions:

1) **According to George Fitzhugh, why does the South have the better way of life?**
2) **Why is the South's economy so strong in comparison to the North's?**
3) **Why is the South's society better than the North's?**
4) **How might a northerner respond to this document?**

As northern and European reformers increasingly criticized the institution if slavery, southerners grew more defensive if their society and its "peculiar institution. " The discomfort that southerners such as Thomas Jefferson felt about the institution was replaced by the ideas if people like Thomas R. Dew, who argued that slavery was a "positive good." George Fitzhugh was among the most effective defenders if southern society during the years immediately preceding the Civil War. Trained in the law, he served in the attorney general's office during the Buchanan administration, but he became well-known for his comparative essays on northern and southern economies and society. An 1856 trip to the North brought him to the home if Gerrit Smith, a relative and staunch abolitionist. While there, he also met Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author if Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The visit made the Virginia native a more aggressive defender if southern civilization. In the following selection from The Sociology for the South, Fitzhugh compared the laissez-faire economy if the North with southern paternalism.*

. . . At the slaveholding South all is peace, quiet, plenty and contentment. We have no mobs, no trades unions, no strikes for higher wages, no armed resistance to the law, but little jealousy of the rich by the poor. We have but few in our jails, and fewer in our poor houses. We produce enough of the comforts and necessaries of life for a population three or four times as numerous as ours. We are wholly exempt from the torrent of pauperism, crime, agrarianism, and infidelity which Europe is pouring from her jails and alms houses on the already crowded North. Population increases slowly, wealth rapidly. In the tide water region of Eastern Virginia, as far as our experience extends, the crops have doubled in fifteen years, whilst the population has been almost stationary. In the same period in the lands, owing to improvements of the soil and the many fine houses erected in the country, have nearly doubled in value. This ratio of improvement has been approximated or exceeded wherever in the South slaves are numerous. We have enough for the present, and no Malthusian spectres frightening us for the future. Wealth is more equally distributed than at the North, where a few millionaires own most of the property of the country. (These millionaires are men of cold hearts and weak minds; they know how to make money, but not how to use it, either for the benefit of themselves or of others.) High intellectual and moral attainments, refinement of head and heart, give standing to a man in the South, however poor he may be. Money is, with few exceptions, the only thing that ennobles at the North. We have poor among us, but none who are over-worked and under-fed. We do not crowd cities because lands are abundant and their owners kind, merciful and hospitable. The poor are as hospitable as the rich, the negro as the white man. Nobody dreams of turning a friend, a relative, or a stranger from his door. The very negro who deems it no crime to steal, would scorn to sell his hospitality. We have no loafers, because the poor relative or friend who borrows our horse, or spends a week under our roof, is a welcome guest. The loose economy, the wasteful mode of living at the South, is a blessing when rightly considered; it keeps want, scarcity and famine at a distance, because it leaves room for retrenchment. The nice, accurate economy of France, England and New England, keeps society always on the verge of famine, because it leaves no room to retrench, that is to live on a part only of what they now consume. Our society exhibits no appearance of precocity, no symptoms of decay. A long course of continuing improvement is in prospect before us, with no limits which human foresight can descry. Actual liberty and equality with our white population has been approached much nearer than in the free States. Few of our whites ever work as day laborers, none as cooks, scullions, ostlers, body servants, or in other menial capacities. One free citizen does not lord it over another; hence that feeling of independence and equality that distinguishes us; hence that pride of character, that self-respect, that give us ascendence when we come in contact with Northerners. It is a distinction to be a Southerner, as it once was to be a Roman citizen….