

From Field to Fashion

by Jack L. Roberts



Level **L/24**
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From Seed to Cloth

Most kids have a favorite T-shirt. When they grow, the T-shirt no longer fits them. They need to buy a new T-shirt.





Every year, people around the world buy more than ten billion T-shirts. Most of those shirts are made from cotton.

What is cotton used for?

T-shirts are not the only things made from cotton. Cotton is also used in all of these things.



money



bedsheets



clothing

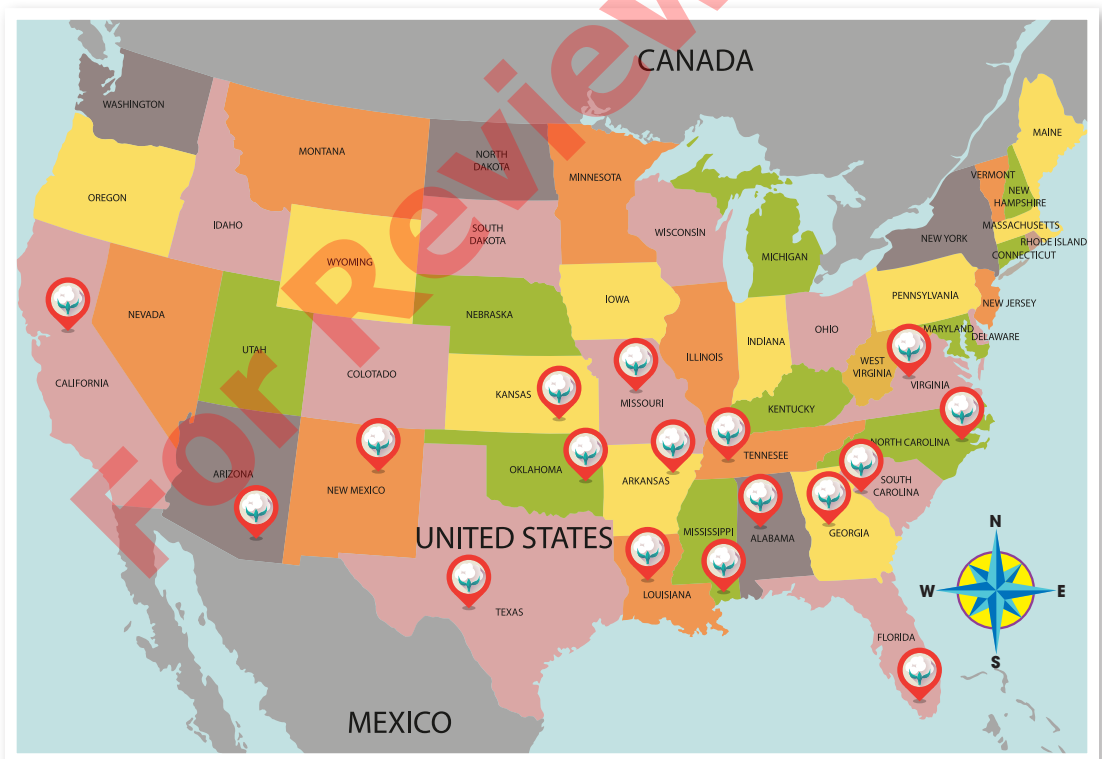
Cotton is a plant. It begins as a seed. When the seed grows, it makes soft, fluffy **fibers**. It takes many steps to turn the fluffy cotton fibers into a T-shirt. Growing cotton is the first step.

▼ Thousands of farms in the United States grow cotton.



Cotton is grown in seventeen different states in the United States. Most of those states are in the South, where the weather is warm. Cotton needs warm weather to grow. It also needs rich soil and lots of water.

▼ Most farmers plant cotton seeds in the early spring.



There are many steps to growing cotton.



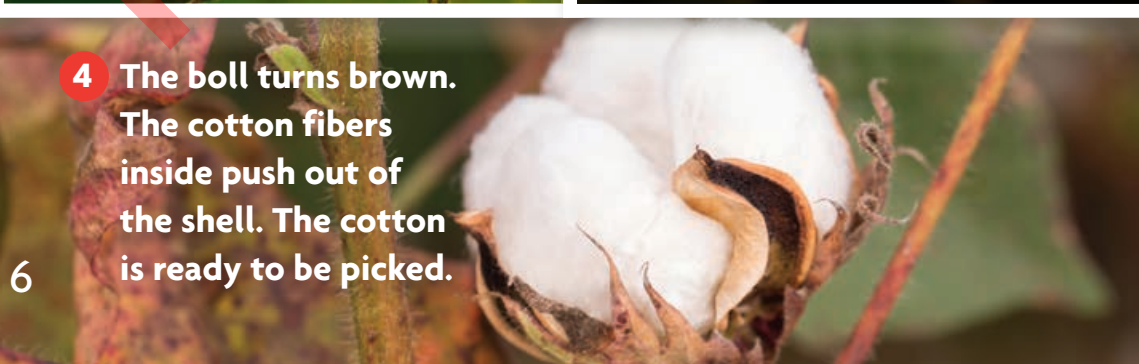
- 1 A farmer plants cotton seeds using a large machine. It can plant 10 to 24 rows of cotton at a time.



- 2 Buds appear on the plant in about 8 weeks.



- 3 The plant blossoms and the petals fall off. A green shell called a cotton boll is left.



- 4 The boll turns brown. The cotton fibers inside push out of the shell. The cotton is ready to be picked.

Years ago, people picked cotton by hand. It could take one person an entire day to pick up to ninety kilograms (200 pounds) of cotton. Today, machines pick cotton. A machine can pick almost ninety kilograms of cotton in ninety seconds.

- ▼ Cotton picker machines can pick six rows of cotton at a time.



After the cotton is picked, machines called cotton gins clean the dirt and seeds out of it. The seeds are used for different things. They are used in feed for cattle. They are also used to make some foods, such as potato chips.

The cotton is then pressed into **bales**. The bales are shipped to **textile** mills.

▼ The invention of the cotton gin made cleaning cotton faster and easier.

▼ One bale of cotton can weigh 226.8 kilograms (about 500 pounds).

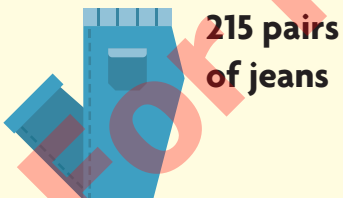


Textile mills are where cotton is turned into thread or yarn. A machine called a loom weaves the yarn into **fabric**.

▼ A loom weaves cotton thread into fabric.



What can be made from one bale of cotton?



215 pairs
of jeans

690
towels



1,256
pillowcases

249
bedsheets

313,600
\$100 bills

