

Name _____ M# _____

Date _____ Period _____

Great Migration Continues Notes



1. What did the war cut off?

2. What did the Great Migration do for the economy during WWI?

Many African Americans traveled north on the _____.

African-American Sleeping Car _____ helped transmit information.

They gathered up newspapers and magazines and _____ them out in the South.

Examples: Newspaper _____

Magazine _____

The Great Migration: Travel by railroad

By Isabel Wilkerson

The Great Migration began as the original hopes for racial equality in the Reconstruction era began to fade. Plans to restore the South and give rights to formerly enslaved people had been replaced by Jim Crow laws. These anti-Black laws enforced segregation and racial discrimination. They would ultimately drive 6 million people to flee the South between 1916 and 1970.

The chance to escape came during World War I. Immigration from Europe had slowed, which created a labor shortage in the North. Companies began hiring Black Southerners to work their steel mills, railroads and factories.



However, there was great resistance in the South to combat the loss of its cheap Black labor. Northern recruiters often had to act in secret or face fines and imprisonment. In Macon, Georgia, a recruiter's license cost \$25,000. The recruiter also needed the unlikely support of 25 local businessmen, 10 ministers and 10 manufacturers. Nonetheless, word soon spread among Black Southerners that the North was open, and people began finding ways to leave on their own.

Southern authorities tried to keep Black Americans from leaving. They arrested them at the railroad platforms on false charges or tore up their tickets and still, they found ways to get out.

The Inspiring Story of Mallie Robinson

A sharecropper named Mallie Robinson was on an early train out of the South. Sharecroppers worked on plantations for a share of the harvest instead of money. Mallie's husband had left her and their five children, including a baby in diapers, under the rule of a harsh plantation owner in Georgia. In 1920, she gathered up her family and boarded one Jim Crow train after another until they reached California.

The extended Robinson family settled in Pasadena, a city in Los Angeles. When they moved into an all-white neighborhood, a cross was burned on their front lawn. But here Mallie's children would go to integrated schools instead of segregated classrooms. They could learn all year, not just in between long hours chopping and picking cotton. Her youngest child, the baby, was called Jackie and he would go on to earn four varsity letters in sports in a single year at UCLA. In 1947, he would become the first Black American to play Major League Baseball when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Mallie had persevered in the face of danger to raise a family alone in an unfamiliar world. If she had stayed in the South, Jackie may never have become a professional athlete. "My mother never lost her composure," recalled Jackie Robinson, who often thought about her bravery in escaping from the South.



The Main Routes Out of The South

Most people left the South on one of three main routes. The first was up the East Coast from Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia to Northern cities including Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston. The second route made a central line from Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Arkansas. It traveled to St. Louis, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and the Midwest. The third route went from Louisiana and Texas to California and the Western states. But Mallie took one of the longest routes in the continental U.S. to get to freedom, a westward journey of more than 2,200 miles from Georgia to California.

The trains that spirited the people away earned names and legends of their own. Perhaps the most celebrated were those that rumbled along the Illinois Central Railroad, where Abraham Lincoln was a lawyer before becoming president. Here, Black Pullman porters secretly gave copies of the Chicago Defender to Southerners hungry for information about the North. The Chicago Defender was a leading newspaper for the Black community.

The Illinois Central was the main route for those fleeing Mississippi for Chicago. Blues singer Muddy Waters made the journey in 1943. His music helped define the genre and pave the way for rock 'n' roll. And a 19-year-old Richard Wright, a sharecropper's son from Mississippi, got on a train in 1927 to feel what he called "the warmth of other suns." In Chicago, Wright washed dishes and swept streets before landing a job at the post office and following his dream to become a writer. He began to visit the library – an unthinkable pastime in his home state of Mississippi.

1. How did changes in transportation influence African-Americans in their settlement choices (where they chose to live)?
2. How did changes in communication influence African-Americans in their settlement choices?
3. How did changes in transportation and communication affect the spread of ideas and culture?