Geography and History Activity

World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914–1920

The Great Migration

The Urbanization of African Americans
During World War I, Northern factories were desperate for workers. Led by Henry Ford, many companies sent agents to the South to recruit African Americans. The promises of high wages and steady work resulted in the Great Migration. Between 300,000 and 500,000 African Americans left the South and moved to Northern cities.

The Race Riots of 1919
In addition to urbanizing the African American population, the Great Migration changed the characteristics of industrial cities such as Chicago, New York, Cleveland, and Detroit. In addition to altering the racial makeup of cities, the Great Migration also resulted in overcrowding, which helped spark a series of race riots in over 20 cities across the North during the summer of 1919.

The Great Migration, 1917–1930

Caption: During World War I, thousands of African Americans began the Great Migration from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North. Many African American neighborhoods, including Harlem in New York City, developed at this time.
Geography and History Activity  Cont.    networks

World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914–1920

Directions: Answer the questions below in the space provided.

Understanding Concepts

1. Why do you think Henry Ford and others wanted to recruit workers from the South?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

2. What other factors besides overcrowding might have contributed to the race riots of 1919? Consider the impact of World War I ending and thousands of American soldiers returning home from Europe.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

3. Why do you think the population of Southern African Americans became more urbanized during the Great Migration period?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Applying Concepts

4. What kinds of cultural changes do you think the Great Migration brought to the African American community?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

5. What do you think were some of the long-term effects of the migration of African Americans from rural Southern areas to Northern urban areas?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________