

WEB LINKS

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<http://www.uic.edu/educ/bctpi/pt3/greatmigration.htm>

<http://cuip.uchicago.edu/wit/99/teams/bronzeville/migration.htm>

<http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/1999/family/webpage12.htm>

CROPS

Cotton and rice are important crops in the lower Mississippi Valley; sugarcane is raised in the delta. The Mississippi River is abundant in freshwater fish; and shrimp are collected from the briny delta waters. The delta also yields sulfur, oil, and gas.

POP SONGS OF 1927

“Old Man River”

“Let A Smile Be Your Umbrella”

“Blue Skies”

POPULAR BLUES SONGS OF 1927

“Back Water Blues” by Bessie Smith.

“Rising High Delta Blues” by Blind Lemon Jefferson.

These songs were written directly about the Mississippi Delta Flood.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ART, AND GROWTH

Charles A. Lindberg flies “Spirit of St. Louis” monoplane nonstop from New York to Paris in 33.5 hours.

The Iron Lung is designed by P. Dinker and L.A. Shaw for polio sufferers.

The Holland Tunnel (1st vehicular) opens between New York and New Jersey.

The 15 millionth Model “T” Ford is produced.

I.P. Pavlov writes about “Conditioned Reflexes.”

Albert Hall improves fluorescent lamps.

The film “The Jazz Singer,” starring Al Jolson, is the first talking film.

Sinclair Lewis writes “Elmer Gantry.”

Matisse paints “Figures with Ornamental Background.”

Hopper paints “Manhattan Bridge.”

DAILY LIFE

Babe Ruth hits 60 home runs for the New York Yankees.

Sacco and Vanzetti are executed.

Airplanes are first used to “dust” crops.

Sonja Henie, ice skater, and Johnny Weismuller, swimmer, are the greatest athletes in their categories.

The Fox Trot is the most popular dance

Remember your character does not have to be a hero. We need villains – some villains will find a change of heart. It is necessary to have many types of people represented in this “drama”.

SOME WERE VICTIMS ...

Many human beings were affected by the flood; 637,000 people had to flee their homes and 300 people died.

SOME WERE RESPONSIBLE ...

People from Louisiana hired people from Mississippi to blow up the levee to save their land on the other side of the river. *Did your character sell out?*

SOME WERE HEROES ...

Some people were also heroes because they saved lives.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER FACTS

Mississippi River, one of the principle rivers of the United States:
c. 2,350 miles (3,780 Kilometers) long.

The combined Missouri-Mississippi system (from the Missouri's headwaters in the Rocky Mountains to the mouth of the Mississippi River) is c. 3,740 miles (6,020 kilometers) long, and ranks as the world's third longest river system, after the Nile and the Amazon.

The most terrifying moment for most people in Mississippi came on April 21, 1927 at 8:00am when the levee broke at Mounds Landing.

A wire went to Army Corp of Engineers, "Crevasse will overflow entire Mississippi Delta."

Read these letters about people who lived through the flood.



The Sampson Family was there.

Sam Huggins

"When the levee broke, the water just come whooshing, you could just see it coming, just see big waves of it coming. It was coming so fast till you just got excited, because you didn't have time to do nothing, nothing but knock a hole in your ceiling and try to get through if you could. It was rising so fast till peoples didn't get a chance to get nothing. People and dogs and everything like that on top of houses. You'd see hogs trying to get somewhere where people could rescue them. Cows just bellowing and swimming. A lot of those farmhouses didn't have no ceiling that would hold nobody.

Cora Walker

"An airplane kept flying over, real low, backwards and forwards, told us we better get to the levee. A lady was coming to the levee, had a bundle of clothes on her head and a rope around her waist leading a cow. Suddenly the water come tearing. She and the cow both drowned. Just as we got to the levee we turn our back and saw our house turned over. We could see our own place tumbling, hear our own things falling down, and a grinding sound. And here come another house floating by the water was stacked. The waves were standing high, real high. If they hit anything they got it. Every time the waves came, the levee would shake like you were rocking in a chair."

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries African-American leaders frequently debated the wisdom of migration. Two decades apart, Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington advised black people to stay in the South. During World War I, on the other hand, Robert Abbott of the *Chicago Defender* and others among the new, business-oriented, black middle class urged black southerners to come northward.

Southern counties and cities attempted to prevent the outmigration. But those who moved were exercising their mobility as free people and demonstrating their optimism about the future. Wrenching themselves from church and community in the South, they ventured into the unknown to escape oppression and create opportunities for themselves. Black migration has been inseparable from protest. Often powerless and with no other means of redress, blacks found mobility the only way to improve their lives. This was true of runaways during slavery, of free people of color before the Civil War, of newly emancipated slaves during the Civil War, and of the Exodusters to Kansas. And it was the thrust behind the Great Migration.

In reshaping their own lives, then, blacks have also reshaped the United States.

MISSISSIPPI DELTA FLOOD DESCRIPTION

Close your eyes and imagine that you are transported back in time to the spring and summer of 1927. You are in the state of Mississippi, living near the river the natives called, “The Father of Waters.” There are great levees protecting you from the powerful Mississippi River, according to the Army Corp of Engineers. Then, imagine awakening in the midst of a month long downpour that engorges the river until it threatens to burst through the levee, flooding everything in sight, destroying your home, and tearing your family apart. Your situation summons the deepest of your emotional bounty and stretches you further than you ever imagined.

What will you do? What decisions will you make?

By the end of the exchanges you will have lived through gut-wrenching hardships with your newly created family, laughed with them, made difficult decisions with them. As the river continued to rise, many Mississippi residents face this challenge nobly, working and helping to save lives while others took advantage for personal profit or use it as a chance to settle scores.

THE GREAT MIGRATION

The Great Migration was a grass roots, leaderless movement. All the migrants—male laborers, women domestics, and families—made individual decisions to move. Nonetheless, the deterioration of the quality of life of southern blacks in the two decades prior to World War I, coupled with a labor shortage in the industrial north, stimulated the migration. In the South, the rise of Jim Crow, the disfranchisement of black voters, and the spread of lynchings and other mob violence against blacks provided strong impetus for individuals and families to move. Widespread flooding and the infestation of cotton by the boll weevil created additional economic woes in the rural South.

For the first time, the North needed southern blacks. Before World War I most northern factories had barred blacks, and few other well-paying positions were open to them. But the war in Europe stretched American industrial capacity to its limits at the very time that European immigration, which had exceeded 1.2 million in 1914, dropped sharply to 100,000 in 1918. Many businesses now hired anyone they could get, and black men and white women found new jobs and industries open to them. Although most blacks obtained only semiskilled and service jobs and their wages were usually lower than those received by white men and women for the same work, they nevertheless earned far more than they could in the South.

The Great Migration differed from previous migrations in that it was a movement directly from the rural South to the urban North. Railroads and black sleeping car porters were an important link between rural black communities and northern cities. Pullman porters on the Illinois Central Railroad distributed the *Chicago Defender*, a black newspaper, on their trips south and facilitated the migration of fellow blacks to Chicago. In the cities of the North, vast black ghettos appeared. Chicago's black population grew from 44,000 in 1910 to 110,000 in 1920.

Not all northerners welcomed the migrants, and white violence against blacks became common. Major race riots occurred, as in East St. Louis in 1917, when white rioters killed thirty-nine African-Americans. There were more than twenty major race riots in 1919. **In Chicago a riot turned into a race war, as black workers and returned veterans fought back. After five days, federal troops were called in; twenty-three blacks and fifteen whites were dead.**

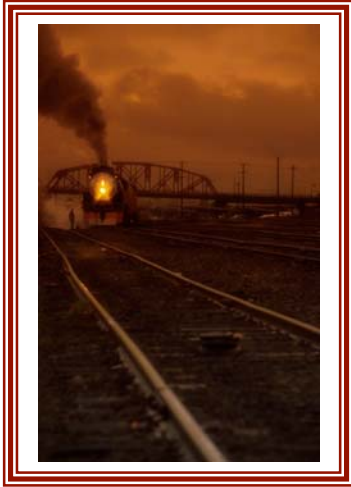
BLACK MIGRATION

Migration has been one of the defining characteristics of black life in the United States since the forced migration of African slaves to the New World. Major movements before the Civil War included the Atlantic slave trade, the extension of slavery to the Mississippi Valley (1820-1850), the manumission and escape of slaves to freedom in the North, the movement of free people of color from the South to the North and Canada, and the immigration of small numbers of black Americans to Africa.

During and after the Civil War emancipated men and women moved to secure their freedom. At the same time many northern free blacks went south as soldiers, and other black men and women traveled south to teach and help lead communal institutions. The Exoduster movement (1877 to 1881) during which forty-thousand to seventy-thousand African-Americans left the former slave states for Kansas was the first grassroots movement out of the South. Blacks, in protest against the loss of political rights, sought equality and opportunity in the West. Then and later, the "Talented Tenth"—educated African-American leaders—fled the rise of Jim Crow and moved northward. Others considered emigration, but only a few ever returned to Africa.

The onset of the Great Migration—the mass movement of black people from the rural areas of the South to the cities of the North—came in the 1890s, as black men and women left to settle in eastern coastal cities such as Philadelphia and New York. The single largest movement of African-Americans occurred during World War I when approximately 500,000 people moved from the rural and small-town south into the cities of the North and the Midwest. The steady migration out of the South lasted until the 1970s; from 1916 through the 1960s, more than 6 million black people made the move

Our fictitious Sampson Family was part of the 6 million.



The Sampson Family

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The Mississippi Flood

Greenville Mississippi ← → Chicago

Research Narration

The causal factor for the Sampson family's migration is the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. The Sampsons are the descendants of people who were enslaved and brought to America to work on the Thackeray Plantation (cotton) in Mississippi. After the Emancipation Proclamation was signed January 1st, 1863, the ancestors went to Greenville to work as sharecroppers.

Research: What did share croppers do?

By 1927 the Sampson family had purchased land and built a home along the Mississippi. In April 1927 the river over ran the levees flooding everyone out. The flood water did not recede until August. The Sampson's were forced to sand bag on top of a levee living in a 10 ft wide patch atop the levee and keep it sand bagged. By September they had had enough and decided to migrate to Chicago.

The Chicago Defender and Black Migrants from the South

Click here to read a first hand account – a letter to the church that asks for help.

[Adams letter]
[Galliard letter]

The *Chicago Defender* was a remarkably successful in encouraging blacks to migrate from the South to Chicago, often listing names of churches and other organizations to whom they could write for help. As a result, thousands of prospective migrants wrote letters to black churches, such as the Bethlehem Baptist Association in Chicago, Illinois, which assumed the task of helping black migrants find housing and employment. They also helped migrants to adjust to their new environment.