

Prediction:

## **The Great Migration**

The Great Migration, or the relocation of more than 6 million African Americans from the rural South to the cities of the North, Midwest and West from 1916 to 1970, had a huge impact on urban life in the United States. Driven from their homes by unsatisfactory economic opportunities and harsh segregationist laws, many blacks headed north, where they took advantage of the need for industrial workers that first arose during the First World War. As Chicago, New York and other cities saw their black populations expand exponentially, migrants were forced to deal with poor working conditions and competition for living space, as well as widespread racism and prejudice. During the Great Migration, African Americans began to build a new place for themselves in public life, actively confronting economic, political and social challenges and creating a new black urban culture that would exert enormous influence in the decades to come.

### Context and Causes of the Great Migration

After the post-Civil War Reconstruction period ended in 1876, white supremacy was largely restored across the South, and the segregationist policies known as Jim Crow soon became the law of the land. Southern blacks were forced to make their living working the land as part of the sharecropping system, which offered little in the way of economic opportunity, especially after a boll weevil epidemic in 1898 caused massive crop damage across the South. And while the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) had been officially dissolved in 1869, it continued underground after that, and intimidation, violence and even lynching of black southerners were not uncommon practices in the Jim Crow South.

### Did You Know?

Around 1916, when the Great Migration began, a factory wage in the urban North was typically three times more than what blacks could expect to make working the land in the rural South.

After World War I broke out in Europe in 1914, industrialized urban areas in the North, Midwest and West faced a shortage of industrial laborers, as the war put an end to the steady tide of European immigration to the United States. With war production kicking into high gear, recruiters enticed African Americans to come north, to the dismay of white Southerners. Black newspapers—particularly the widely read Chicago Defender—published advertisements touting the opportunities available in the cities of the North and West, along with first-person accounts of success.

Somebody

Wanted

But

So

1. Define the great migration in your own words.
2. What were some of the main causes of the great migration?

Prediction:

### Times is Gettin' Harder Lyrics

Times is gettin' harder,  
Money's gettin' scarce.  
Soon as I gather my cotton and corn,  
I'm bound to leave this place.

White folks sittin' in the parlor,  
Eatin' that cake and drink,  
Niggers way down to the kitchen,  
Squabblin' over turnip greens.

Times is gettin' harder,  
Money's gettin' scarce.  
Soon as I gather my cotton and corn,  
I'm bound to leave this place.

Me and my brother was out.  
Thought we'd have some fun.  
He stole three chickens.  
We began to run.

Times is gettin' harder,  
Money's gettin' scarce.  
Soon as I gather my cotton and corn  
I'm bound to leave this place.

Somebody                      Wanted                      But                      So

1. What do the lyrics show about the differences in social status between white and black people?

2. When am "I bound to leave this place?" Explain.

3. Based on the article we read, where do you think the speaker is going to go? Why would he want to leave? Use text evidence to support your answer!