

Name _____ Date _____

Booker T. Washington

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

Booker T. Washington was born into slavery on a Virginia plantation in 1856. After emancipation, he excelled in school despite working as a servant throughout his childhood in the Jim Crow South. After attending and teaching at Hampton Institute in Virginia, he went on to co-found and run Tuskegee Institute in Alabama a school focused on technical education for Black people. He became a national figure after an 1895 speech at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. In this speech, Washington preached the importance of self-help, patience, and compromise when it came to civil rights. He encouraged technical education in industrial and agricultural trades and urged African Americans to accept segregation in exchange for economic opportunity.

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Washington believed this approach would gradually lead White people to fully accept Black people as citizens. Through hard work and accumulation of wealth, Black people would earn their position in society. For now though, they should set aside their quest for full civil rights and remain separate. Washington had plenty of Black supporters and was lauded by White people from both the North and the South for his conciliatory position.

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2. b'

Read the following passage from Booker T. Washington's 1895 speech at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta:

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Notes

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When it came to the attainment of civil rights for Black Americans, Washington and his main detractor, W.E.B. Du Bois, had very different philosophies. How much of this divergence can be attributed to each man's upbringing and life experience? Washington, born enslaved in the South, offered a pragmatic and conservative ideology. His insistence that African Americans appreciate the opportunities they have is likely a direct reflection of his ascent from enslavement to a successful, self-made educator and public figure. Du Bois, born free in the North, rebutted Washington's philosophy, advocating for a more idealistic and radical ideology. His stubbornness and sense of possibility is likely a result of his more progressive upbringing and access to elite education. As the 20th century continued, Du Bois's philosophy flowed directly into the civil rights movement. All the while, the disagreement between accommodationist thought and calls for radical change has persisted.

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