

Name _____

Date _____

Ida B. Wells - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. While working as a teacher in Memphis, Tennessee, Wells began contributing articles to newspapers. Among other topics, she wrote about the racial inequities plaguing the public school system. The school system retaliated by refusing to renew her teaching contract. Wells was now out of a teaching job—but in some ways, this liberated her. She bought a partnership in a Black-owned newspaper called **The Memphis Free Speech** and began working as a full-time journalist. “I was happy in the thought that our influence was helpful and that I was doing the work I loved and had proved that I could make a living at it,” Wells recalled in her autobiography, **Crusade for Justice.** Then, in 1892, a horrific event occurred in Memphis. Three Black grocery store owners were murdered by an enraged White mob. The grocers were innocent of any crimes. However, the success of their grocery store had engendered anger among some White community members. The tragedy, Wells wrote, “changed the whole course of my life.”

Based on the passage, what inference can you make about why the Black grocers were murdered?

- A. It was a random murder; the grocers were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- B. The grocers had been too outspoken about inequities in the school system.
- C. The grocers had a long history of committing various crimes in the community.



D.

Some White people did not like to see Black businesses become successful.

The text states, “The grocers were innocent of any crimes. However, the success of their grocery store had engendered anger among some White community members.” It also states that the murder was committed “by an enraged White mob.” From these statements, we can infer that the grocers were murdered as a result of anger caused by their success.

2. An investigative journalist is a reporter who researches and writes about a certain topic in order to expose hidden truths about it. Ida B. Wells used investigative journalism to uncover truths about lynching in America. Lynching refers to the illegal mob murder of individuals in the name of supposed justice. In the post-Civil War United States, lynching was racially motivated. Black Americans, particularly in the South, lived under its constant threat, and many lost their lives to the foul practice. Wells knew that a large number of Americans weren't aware of the full extent of the situation, and she was determined to raise awareness about it.

Which of these is an example of investigative journalism?



- A. A series of articles revealing a political scandal and its cover up
- The passage states, "An investigative journalist is a reporter who researches and writes about a certain topic in order to expose hidden truths about it."*
- B. A personal essay about the challenges of parenting
- C. A letter to the editor praising the accomplishments of the school board
- D. A how-to article explaining the steps involved in installing a kitchen sink

3. Wells launched a full-scale investigation of lynchings throughout the South. She interviewed victims' loved ones and analyzed police records and newspaper reports. Her investigation revealed that lynchings were not about restoring justice in the face of crimes, as many claimed. Instead, they were about oppressing and terrorizing Black Americans. Shortly after Wells published these findings in an article, a White mob destroyed her newspaper office. Wells was visiting Philadelphia when this occurred, but the mob threatened to kill her if she set foot in Memphis again. Wells went to New York, but she didn't back down. She published a pamphlet called *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases.* In it, she wrote, "It is with no pleasure I have dipped my hands in the corruption here exposed. Somebody must show that the Afro-American race is more sinned against than sinning, and it seems to have fallen upon me to do so. The awful death-roll that Judge Lynch is calling every week is appalling, not only because of the lives it takes, the rank cruelty and outrage to the victims, but because of the prejudice it fosters."

With which statement would the author of this passage most likely agree?



- A. Despite threats and intimidation, Wells maintained courage and persistence.
- The passage says, "The mob threatened to kill her if she set foot in Memphis again." It also says, "Wells went to New York, but she didn't back down." From these statements, we can infer that the author would agree that Wells maintained courage and persistence in the face of threats and intimidation.*
- B. Through compassion and flexible thinking, Wells came to accept the logic of lynching.
- C. Wells fabricated her findings in order to bring more attention to her cause.
- D. Wells' work was motivated primarily by her desire for fame and fortune.

4. Wells ultimately settled in Chicago, where she continued her work. In 1895, she published *The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*. In addition to presenting facts and details about lynching, she issued a call for readers to engage in activism against it. Below is a quote from this work: “We demand a fair trial by law for those accused of crime, and punishment by law after honest conviction. No maudlin sympathy for criminals is solicited, but we do ask that the law shall punish all alike. We earnestly desire those that control the forces which make public sentiment to join with us in the demand. Surely the humanitarian spirit of this country which reaches out to denounce the treatment of the Russian Jews, the Armenian Christians, the laboring poor of Europe, the Siberian exiles and the native women of India—will not longer refuse to lift its voice on this subject.... Can you remain silent and inactive when such things are done in our own community and country? Is your duty to humanity in the United States less binding?”

According to the quote in this passage, what did Wells want?



- A. For people accused of crimes to be treated equally under the law, no matter their race.
- The text states, “We demand a fair trial by law for those accused of crime, and punishment by law after honest conviction. No maudlin sympathy for criminals is solicited, but we do ask that the law shall punish all alike.”*
- B. For Black people accused of crimes to be given leniency than White people accused of crimes.
- C. For Americans to stop speaking out against poor treatment of people in other countries.
- D. For Americans to speak out more firmly against poor treatment of people in other countries.