Changing Prison Life

Read how two kinds of reform changed Alabama prisons.

SS24.5.2c "Identify and describe examples of prison reform, including the abolition of the convict-lease system and leadership of Julia Tutwiler."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two different prison reforms and circle a problem each reform aimed to fix. Use your marks to connect each change to its purpose.

Two Paths to Prison Reform

1. In the late 1800s, some Southern states sent people convicted of crimes to work for private businesses. Under the convict-lease system, a company paid the state to use prisoners as workers. In Alabama, many worked in coal mines. Companies could make money from their labor, but prisoners faced dangerous work and poor treatment. Families and reformers called attention to these conditions.

2. Julia Tutwiler, an Alabama educator, visited prisons and spoke up for the people held there. She urged state leaders to provide cleaner living spaces, medical care, and education. She also pushed for separate places for women and men, rather than keeping them together. Tutwiler believed people in prison deserved humane treatment and a chance to learn, even while serving a sentence.

3. Prison reform means changing prison rules and conditions to make them more fair and humane. Tutwiler's work was one example. Another was ending the convict-lease system. Reformers argued that businesses should not profit from prisoners' forced labor. Alabama ended convict leasing in 1928, after Tutwiler's lifetime. Ending it stopped the state from leasing prisoners to private companies, though other problems in prisons remained.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What was one problem with convict leasing, and what changed when Alabama ended it?

2. Describe two changes Julia Tutwiler urged state leaders to make in prisons.

3. How was Tutwiler's push for education different from using prisoners' work to make money?

4. How did Tutwiler's efforts and the end of convict leasing change different parts of prison life?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Plan two objects for a museum display about Alabama prison reform: one for Julia Tutwiler's work and one for the end of convict leasing. In four sentences, name your objects and explain what each teaches about a different change.

ANSWER KEY

Changing Prison Life

GRADE 5 · SS24.5.2c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two different prison reforms and circle a problem each reform aimed to fix. Use your marks to connect each change to its purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What was one problem with convict leasing, and what changed when Alabama ended it?	**Prisoners faced dangerous work or poor treatment. Ending convict leasing stopped the state from leasing prisoners to private companies.**
2	Describe two changes Julia Tutwiler urged state leaders to make in prisons.	**Accept any two: cleaner living spaces, medical care, education, or separate places for women and men.**
3	How was Tutwiler's push for education different from using prisoners' work to make money?	**Education gave people in prison a chance to learn, while convict leasing let businesses profit from their labor.**
4	How did Tutwiler's efforts and the end of convict leasing change different parts of prison life?	**Tutwiler sought better care and conditions for people in prison. Ending convict leasing stopped the state from sending prisoners to work for private companies.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would display a schoolbook to represent Julia Tutwiler's work. It would show that she wanted people in prison to have a chance to learn. I would also display a paper marked “Lease Ended” to represent the end of convict leasing. It would show that Alabama stopped leasing prisoners to private businesses.

Accept other accurate examples of Tutwiler's efforts and other symbolic objects. Students should explain what each object represents, not claim that a proposed object was an actual historical artifact.