Alabama Changing Times

Farm challenges and cultural contributions in the early twentieth century

SS24.5.6 "Identify the contributions of Alabamians to sports, film, and the arts during the early twentieth century, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Jazz Age. 6a Explain how overcropping, the boll weevil..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the three problems that hurt Alabama cotton farmers. Circle each named Alabamian, then write S for sports, F for film, or A for arts beside the name to show the person's contribution.

Hard Times, Lasting Contributions

1 In the 1920s, many Alabama families depended on cotton. Planting cotton on the same land year after year without replacing nutrients, called overcropping, wore out the soil. Weaker soil meant smaller harvests. Boll weevils, tiny beetles, damaged cotton plants and cut harvests further. At the same time, low cotton prices meant farmers earned less for each bale they sold. Some families struggled to pay their debts.

2 Alabamians also made names in sports and film. Jesse Owens was born in Oakville, Alabama. In 1936, he won four gold medals in track and field at the Olympic Games. His victories challenged the racist idea that some people were born better athletes than others. Tallulah Bankhead, born in Huntsville, became an actor on stage and in movies during the early twentieth century. Her work brought an Alabama performer to wide audiences.

3 The arts told other kinds of stories. W. C. Handy, born in Florence, wrote and published blues music, including "The St. Louis Blues" in 1914. His songs helped bring the blues to new listeners as jazz grew popular in the 1920s. Zora Neale Hurston, born in Alabama, wrote stories that celebrated Black voices and traditions. Her writing became part of the Harlem Renaissance, a movement of Black art and literature.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did overcropping affect Alabama cotton farmers?

2. How did boll weevils and low cotton prices each make it harder for farmers to earn money?

3. How did Jesse Owens contribute to sports, and how did Tallulah Bankhead contribute to film?

4. What did W. C. Handy and Zora Neale Hurston each contribute to the arts?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence label for a museum display called “Alabama in Changing Times.” Explain how two farm problems worked together, describe one Alabamian's contribution from the passage, and tell visitors why both stories belong in the display.

ANSWER KEY

Alabama Changing Times

GRADE 5 · SS24.5.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the three problems that hurt Alabama cotton farmers. Circle each named Alabamian, then write S for sports, F for film, or A for arts beside the name to show the person's contribution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did overcropping affect Alabama cotton farmers?	**Overcropping wore out the soil, which led to smaller cotton harvests.**
2	How did boll weevils and low cotton prices each make it harder for farmers to earn money?	**Boll weevils damaged cotton and reduced harvests. Low prices meant farmers earned less for each bale they sold.**
3	How did Jesse Owens contribute to sports, and how did Tallulah Bankhead contribute to film?	**Owens won four Olympic gold medals in track and field in 1936. Bankhead acted in movies and brought an Alabama performer to wide audiences.**
4	What did W. C. Handy and Zora Neale Hurston each contribute to the arts?	**Handy wrote and published blues music that reached new listeners. Hurston wrote stories celebrating Black voices and traditions as part of the Harlem Renaissance.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Worn-out soil and boll weevils both reduced cotton harvests, leaving many Alabama farmers with less to sell. Zora Neale Hurston helped shape the Harlem Renaissance by writing stories that celebrated Black voices and traditions. These stories belong together because they show both the hardships Alabamians faced and the ways they shaped American culture.

Accept any accurate pair of farm problems and any named Alabamian whose contribution is correctly described. The museum label should connect farm hardship and cultural achievement in the student's own words.