Two Views of Change

Read artworks as evidence of the Great Migration

6-12.HT1.7 "Analyze, compare, and/or interpret artistic works to understand cultural and historical context and experience."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show what Lawrence chose to paint, and circle two details that show what Motley chose to paint. Use your marks to compare the experiences their works highlight.

Movement and Nightlife

1 Between 1916 and 1970, millions of Black Americans moved from the South to cities in the North and West. Historians call this movement the Great Migration. People left for many reasons, including unfair laws, threats of violence, and limited jobs. They also hoped to find better pay and greater freedom. Paintings made during this era offer clues about what change felt like, not just where people went. An artist chooses which faces, colors, and moments to show. Comparing two works can reveal different sides of a shared history, but a painting cannot speak for every person who lived it.

2 In 1941, artist Jacob Lawrence completed *The Migration Series*, sixty small paintings with written captions. His parents had moved from the South to the North. Several panels show groups of travelers carrying bags or waiting in crowded spaces. Lawrence used flat shapes and bold colors instead of painting every detail. Some panels show the danger and unfair treatment people faced in the South. Others show hard conditions in northern cities, including crowded housing. His choices keep attention on many people rather than a single hero. The series suggests that moving could bring hope and difficulty at the same time.

3 Archibald Motley painted *Nightlife* in 1943. It shows a lively Black nightclub scene in Chicago, with dancers and strong red colors. Motley painted people enjoying a city night, not traveling to reach the city. Chicago had grown as many Black southerners moved there during the Great Migration. His scene highlights a community making its own spaces for music and pleasure. Yet a nightclub scene does not show every part of city life, such as low wages or housing barriers. Together, the works offer different views: Lawrence shows movement and its struggles, while Motley shows one kind of urban social life.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What do the travelers and crowded spaces in Lawrence's series suggest about the Great Migration?

2. What does Motley's choice to paint a Chicago nightclub suggest about Black city life during this era?

3. How do the moments Lawrence and Motley chose to paint give different views of the Great Migration?

4. Why would *Nightlife* alone give an incomplete picture of Black life in Chicago at the time?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum can display only one of these works to introduce the Great Migration. Choose a work and write a four-sentence label that uses two details from the passage to explain what the work reveals about people's experiences and names one experience it leaves out.

ANSWER KEY

Two Views of Change

GRADES 6-12 · 6-12.HT1.7

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show what Lawrence chose to paint, and circle two details that show what Motley chose to paint. Use your marks to compare the experiences their works highlight. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What do the travelers and crowded spaces in Lawrence's series suggest about the Great Migration?	**They suggest that many people made the journey and that travel could be crowded and difficult.**
2	What does Motley's choice to paint a Chicago nightclub suggest about Black city life during this era?	**It suggests that Black communities created spaces for music, dancing, and pleasure in the city.**
3	How do the moments Lawrence and Motley chose to paint give different views of the Great Migration?	**Lawrence shows the journey and its hardships, while Motley shows one kind of social life in a city where many migrants settled.**
4	Why would *Nightlife* alone give an incomplete picture of Black life in Chicago at the time?	**Its joyful nightclub scene does not show hardships such as low wages or housing barriers.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Jacob Lawrence's *The Migration Series* shows travelers carrying bags and waiting in crowded spaces. The bags suggest that people were leaving their homes to seek a different life. The crowded spaces suggest that many people shared the difficult journey. The series does not show the lively Chicago nightlife that Motley painted.

Accept interpretations grounded in details from the passage. For Part 3, the label should connect two details to historical experience and identify something the chosen work does not show.