Chasing a Better Life

How jobs and living conditions shape migration

6-9.WH.3.2 "Describe examples that show how economic opportunity and a higher standard of living are important factors in human migration."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline job opportunities that drew people to a new place. Circle details that show how moving might improve or limit a family's standard of living.

Two Journeys for Work

1 Between 1916 and 1970, millions of Black Americans left the rural South for cities in the North and West. This movement is called the Great Migration. Many families had worked as farm laborers or sharecroppers, who rented land and gave the landowner part of their crop. Factory jobs in cities such as Chicago often paid more cash than farm work. A steadier paycheck could help a family buy food, pay rent, and keep children in school. Racist violence and unfair laws also pushed people to leave the South.

2 During the 1940s and 1950s, many people moved from Puerto Rico to New York City. On the island, changes in farming reduced the number of agricultural jobs. In New York, factories offered wages that could provide more reliable income. With that income, some families hoped to afford better housing and more choices for their children. Moving did not remove every problem: jobs could be hard to keep, and crowded apartments were costly. Because Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, this was a move within the United States, not immigration from another country.

3 These journeys show that a job offer can change more than a person's paycheck. Families may compare what they can earn with what they must spend on food, housing, and transportation. A higher wage does not always mean a better life if rent rises even faster. People may also weigh access to schools or medical care against the cost of leaving friends and relatives. The choice is rarely simple: the chance to earn more and live more comfortably can matter even when a destination has serious problems.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why might a sharecropping family have moved to Chicago even if they already had work in the South? Explain the job opportunity and one possible effect on daily life.

2. How could a factory job in New York City have improved life for a family moving from Puerto Rico?

3. Why might earning a higher wage in a city fail to improve a family's standard of living? Use a detail from the passage.

4. Someone says these migrants moved only to escape problems at home. Use one detail from each migration to show why that claim leaves out an important reason.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a family in a mountain village earns little from seasonal market work. A nearby town offers year-round repair jobs and a public clinic, but rent is higher. In four sentences, explain why the family might move, how life could improve, and one reason the move might not help.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADES 6-9 · 6-9.WH.3.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline job opportunities that drew people to a new place. Circle details that show how moving might improve or limit a family's standard of living. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why might a sharecropping family have moved to Chicago even if they already had work in the South? Explain the job opportunity and one possible effect on daily life.	**Factory work in Chicago often paid more cash than farm work. A steadier paycheck could help the family buy food, pay rent, or keep children in school.**
2	How could a factory job in New York City have improved life for a family moving from Puerto Rico?	**Factory wages could provide more reliable income, which the family might use for better housing or more choices for their children.**
3	Why might earning a higher wage in a city fail to improve a family's standard of living? Use a detail from the passage.	**Higher wages might not cover higher costs. For example, crowded apartments in New York City were costly.**
4	Someone says these migrants moved only to escape problems at home. Use one detail from each migration to show why that claim leaves out an important reason.	**People leaving the rural South could seek better-paying factory work in cities such as Chicago. People leaving Puerto Rico could seek factory wages and more reliable income in New York City.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The family might move to get a year-round repair job instead of relying on seasonal market work. Steady pay could help them buy what they need throughout the year. Living near a public clinic could also make it easier to get medical care. But higher rent might use up the extra income, leaving them no better off.

Accept answers that connect a specific job opportunity to a possible change in living conditions. For the final task, students should explain both a possible benefit and the effect higher rent could have.