Greenwood Grew

Community growth, segregation, and rebuilding in Oklahoma

OKH.C.6.3.C "Describe the continued growth of African American communities, including the emergence of "Black Wall Street" in Tulsa's Greenwood District."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two actions that helped African American communities grow, circle one obstacle to that growth, and write 1 beside one example of rebuilding.

Building Community in Oklahoma

1 In the early 1900s, African American communities continued to grow across Oklahoma, even as segregation restricted where Black people could live, work, and shop. Some families moved from other states, seeking land, jobs, or a chance to build institutions of their own. In towns such as Boley, residents opened businesses, founded churches, and supported schools. These places were more than clusters of houses: they gave neighbors ways to earn a living, educate children, and organize together. Growth did not mean equal treatment. Discriminatory laws and violence threatened these communities, so local networks of support mattered.

2 In Tulsa, the Greenwood District became a striking example of that growth. African American entrepreneurs established stores, restaurants, barbershops, and professional offices along Greenwood Avenue. Black customers often shopped there because segregation limited their options elsewhere in the city. Money spent at one business could help another: a shopkeeper might buy supplies from a neighboring store or hire a local lawyer. Residents also built churches and community organizations, creating places to meet and solve problems together. The district earned the nickname "Black Wall Street," a reference to its busy business life, not a claim that everyone who lived there was wealthy.

3 Greenwood's success existed alongside sharp danger. In 1921, a white mob attacked the district in the Tulsa Race Massacre, killing residents and destroying homes and businesses. Survivors faced enormous losses, but many stayed or returned. They reopened shops and rebuilt homes despite obstacles, including efforts by city officials to restrict how the burned land could be used. Greenwood's rebuilding shows that the district's story did not end with destruction. Its earlier rise and later recovery both depended on the work of residents, while the massacre shows how racism could violently interrupt the continued growth of African American communities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did residents help African American communities grow in Oklahoma towns such as Boley?

2. How did segregation shape the growth of businesses in Greenwood?

3. How did Greenwood's businesses and community organizations support the district's growth?

4. How does Greenwood's rebuilding after 1921 add to the story of the community's growth?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label that corrects a visitor who thinks “Black Wall Street” meant everyone in Greenwood was wealthy and that the district disappeared permanently in 1921. Use facts from at least two paragraphs to explain how residents' actions and racism both shaped its history.

ANSWER KEY

Greenwood Grew

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.6.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two actions that helped African American communities grow, circle one obstacle to that growth, and write 1 beside one example of rebuilding. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did residents help African American communities grow in Oklahoma towns such as Boley?	**They opened businesses, founded churches, and supported schools, creating ways to earn a living, educate children, and organize.**
2	How did segregation shape the growth of businesses in Greenwood?	**Segregation limited where Black customers could shop elsewhere in Tulsa, so many shopped at businesses in Greenwood.**
3	How did Greenwood's businesses and community organizations support the district's growth?	**Businesses provided goods, services, and work, while local spending connected businesses. Churches and organizations gave residents places to meet and solve problems.**
4	How does Greenwood's rebuilding after 1921 add to the story of the community's growth?	**Survivors stayed or returned and rebuilt homes and shops despite major losses and obstacles, showing that community growth continued after the massacre.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Greenwood's nickname, "Black Wall Street," described its busy businesses, not universal wealth. Segregation limited where Black Tulsans could shop, yet residents supported stores and professional offices while building churches and community groups. A white mob destroyed homes and businesses in 1921, but survivors stayed or returned and rebuilt. Greenwood's growth and recovery show what neighbors created together and how racism threatened that work.

Accept accurate descriptions of community growth that connect residents' efforts with the limits imposed by segregation or violence. The museum label should correct both misconceptions and draw on at least two passage paragraphs.