Greenwood's Long Shadow

Trace causes and lasting effects of the Tulsa Race Massacre

OKH.C.6.3.E "Analyze the causes of the Tulsa Race Massacre, including its continued social and economic impact."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two immediate sparks of the attack, circle two deeper conditions that made it possible, and number three ways the destruction continued to affect Greenwood.

What Happened to Greenwood?

1. On May 31, 1921, a crowd gathered outside the Tulsa courthouse after a newspaper reported that Dick Rowland, a Black teenager, had been accused of assaulting a white elevator operator. The accusation was never proved. Black residents, some armed, arrived to protect Rowland from a possible lynching; white residents also came, and a confrontation turned violent. The report and the clash were immediate sparks, but they do not explain the scale of the attack. Segregation, racist hostility toward Greenwood's successful Black businesses, and a history of mob violence had created conditions in which a white mob could target an entire neighborhood.

2. During the night and the next morning, white attackers looted and burned much of Greenwood, Tulsa's thriving Black neighborhood. City officials deputized some white men, and authorities failed to protect residents. Authorities, including National Guard troops, detained many Black residents as the attack ended. Historians estimate that as many as 300 people died, but the exact number remains unknown. More than a thousand homes were destroyed, along with businesses and churches. Many survivors lost both shelter and income. Insurers often refused to pay claims, citing exclusions for damage caused by riots. Residents rebuilt parts of Greenwood, but doing so without compensation drained savings and added debt.

3. The losses did not end when the fires went out. A family whose home or shop was destroyed could not pass that property, or its profits, to the next generation. In later decades, urban renewal projects and construction of Interstate 244 removed additional Greenwood homes and businesses, weakening a community already struggling to rebuild. Displacement also disrupted neighbors' ties and places where people gathered. Descendants and community members have pressed for accurate public accounts, preservation, and repair. The massacre's effects are therefore economic and social: lost wealth and opportunity, alongside damaged community networks and a long fight to have the violence acknowledged.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the passage call the newspaper report and courthouse clash "sparks" rather than a complete explanation for the attack?

2. How did officials' decisions and authorities' treatment of Black residents deepen the harm?

3. How did insurers' refusal to pay claims turn the destruction into a longer-term economic loss?

4. How did later development projects compound both the economic and social damage described in the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a brief proposal to Tulsa's city council for two actions that could address the massacre's lasting effects. Include one action aimed at economic loss and one aimed at social harm, and explain how each responds to evidence in the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Greenwood's Long Shadow

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.6.3.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two immediate sparks of the attack, circle two deeper conditions that made it possible, and number three ways the destruction continued to affect Greenwood. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the passage call the newspaper report and courthouse clash "sparks" rather than a complete explanation for the attack?	**They set off the immediate confrontation, but segregation, racist hostility toward Greenwood's businesses, and a history of mob violence helped make an attack on the whole neighborhood possible.**
2	How did officials' decisions and authorities' treatment of Black residents deepen the harm?	**City officials deputized some white men, authorities failed to protect Greenwood residents, and authorities detained many Black residents as the attack ended.**
3	How did insurers' refusal to pay claims turn the destruction into a longer-term economic loss?	**Survivors had to rebuild without insurance payments, which drained savings and added debt after they had already lost homes or businesses.**
4	How did later development projects compound both the economic and social damage described in the passage?	**Urban renewal and Interstate 244 removed more homes and businesses, adding to property and income losses. Displacement also disrupted neighbors' ties and gathering places.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The city should fund grants for descendants who want to open businesses in Greenwood. Attackers destroyed shops, and rebuilding without insurance payments drained survivors' savings. Grants would help address that lost opportunity without pretending the losses can be fully reversed. The city should also preserve places in Greenwood where residents can gather and learn its history. The massacre and later displacement damaged community ties, so protecting shared spaces would address a social harm as well as preserve an accurate public account.

Accept other evidence-based explanations that distinguish immediate sparks from deeper causes and connect the destruction to later social or economic effects. For Part 3, look for two distinct, plausible actions with clear links to passage evidence.