Greenwood and the Law

Tracing barriers, community action, and lasting effects

OKH.C.6 "Examine Oklahoma's political, economic, and social history regarding race during the early decades following statehood. Examine how the development of the oil industry affected major sectors of employment and the development of..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three barriers or events that changed opportunities for Black Oklahomans. Circle a result of each, then give each connected pair the same number.

Building Greenwood

1. When Oklahoma became a state in 1907, lawmakers quickly built racial separation into public life. Senate Bill 1 required separate railroad cars and waiting rooms for Black and white passengers. Its purpose was to enforce segregation. Oklahoma also used a grandfather clause to exempt voters from a literacy test if their ancestors could vote before 1866, favoring white voters. In 1915, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the clause in Guinn v. United States because it violated the Fifteenth Amendment.

2. Segregation did not stop Black Oklahomans from building businesses and neighborhoods. In Tulsa's Greenwood District, Black entrepreneurs opened shops, hotels, and professional offices that served a growing community. The district earned the nickname "Black Wall Street" because of its thriving businesses. Yet success did not guarantee safety or equal treatment. Discrimination limited access to other parts of Tulsa. Greenwood's businesses show how residents created economic opportunities despite barriers imposed by law and everyday prejudice.

3. In May 1921, a Tulsa newspaper published an accusation against Dick Rowland, a Black teenager, after an elevator encounter with a white worker. Crowds gathered near the courthouse, and Black residents feared Rowland would be lynched. Violence followed. White attackers burned much of Greenwood, killing residents and destroying homes and businesses. Survivors faced displacement and lost wealth, while rebuilding required resources many families no longer had. The massacre's economic damage lasted long after the fires ended.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What did Senate Bill 1 require, and what was its purpose?

2. How did the grandfather clause favor white voters, and what happened to it?

3. How did Greenwood residents create opportunities despite discrimination?

4. Why did the massacre harm Greenwood's economy long after 1921?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence exhibit label connecting one voting or segregation law, Greenwood's growth, and the 1921 attack. Explain why Greenwood's success did not mean its residents were protected.

ANSWER KEY

Greenwood and the Law

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three barriers or events that changed opportunities for Black Oklahomans. Circle a result of each, then give each connected pair the same number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did Senate Bill 1 require, and what was its purpose?	**It required separate railroad cars and waiting rooms for Black and white passengers to enforce segregation.**
2	How did the grandfather clause favor white voters, and what happened to it?	**It exempted voters from a literacy test if their ancestors could vote before 1866, favoring white voters. The Supreme Court struck it down in 1915.**
3	How did Greenwood residents create opportunities despite discrimination?	**Black entrepreneurs opened shops, hotels, and professional offices that served their growing community.**
4	Why did the massacre harm Greenwood's economy long after 1921?	**Attackers destroyed businesses and homes, leaving survivors with lost wealth and fewer resources to rebuild.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Senate Bill 1 segregated railroad travel, showing how Oklahoma law restricted Black residents. Greenwood's Black entrepreneurs built businesses despite unequal treatment. White attackers destroyed homes and businesses there in 1921, wiping out wealth families had built. An exhibit should show both the community's achievement and the lasting harm, because success did not mean residents were protected.

For the markings, accept any three passage-supported barrier-or-event and result pairs. The exhibit label should connect a specific law, Greenwood's growth, and the attack while explaining the difference between economic success and protection.