Worksheet For Video: Ida B. Wells, A Passion for Justice

These questions follow the video in order.

1. When and where was Ida Wells born?
2. What was the background of the Wells family? Her father? Her mother? What were their childhoods like?
3. Why do you think it was illegal to teach slaves? What was interesting about the schooling of Ida? How did the freed African-Americans feel about education? Why?
4. What were the conditions for African-Americans after the Civil War? Why was it known as a period of great optimism?
5. What were three conditions of the post-war South? Why were the African-Americans scapegoats?
6. What was the first crisis Ida faced? What happened to her parents? Her siblings? Why did her childhood end as it did?
7. Why did Ida go to the big city? What were the conditions like in Memphis?
8. What was the Lyceum?
10. Describe the African-American middle class of Memphis.
11. What effect did the withdrawal of federal troops and Supreme Court decisions have on African-American rights?
12. What laws did the southern states pass that created a new order? What was the effect on the progress of African-Americans?
13. Why did Wells refuse to go into the other car? What did she do? What happened to her? What did the whites do? How did she respond? What was the end result? What effect did the Supreme Court’s decision have on her attitude about her race?
14. What political action did Wells take to get her story out? What organizations helped her? What meaning did she find for her life?
15. Why did Ida lose her teaching job? Why was she called “the Princess of the Press?”
16. What personal qualities made Wells popular? What issues did she focus on in her writing?
17. What was the incident in Arkansas that concerned African-American officials? Why did the governor of Arkansas do nothing? What was the “lynch law?” How did pamphlets affect the outcome?
19. Describe Ida's friend that was killed. Who was one of the lynchers?
20. How did Wells retaliate? What issues did she speak out about? What questions was she forced to ask herself? Why were her words so inflammatory?
21. After the incident, where did many of the African-Americans of Memphis go? What effect did it have on the economy of the Memphis?
22. What did Ida do after staying in Memphis? What did she urge people to do? What strategy did she use?
23. What reasons were given for lynching of African-American men? What did Wells find out about these charges? What injustice did she speak out about the most?
24. Why was Ida forced into exile? Where did Ida go? Why?
25. What was the African-American Woman's Club movement? Why was it so powerful?
26. Why did Ida feel at first the lynching was somehow justified? What changed her mind? Why did she feel that lynching was being used? What core democratic values are missing when lynching occurs?
27. Who was Frederick Douglass? What did he think of Ida's work? Why was Wells' work so highly regarded?
28. Why did Wells seek help from other countries? What was her strategy? How did it force the Memphis media to take lynching seriously?
29. What was ironic about the Colombian Exhibition? How did Wells deal with the issue? What did she accomplish?
30. How did the white community react?
31. Why was Wells concerned about the attitude toward African-American women? What did she do about it? How did whites view Frederick Douglass compared with Wells? Why?
32. What efforts does Wells make for promoting the rights of women?
33. Why did Wells criticize the actions of Susan B Anthony?
34. Who did Wells marry? What was his background? What was the result? Why did it take so long for her to get married?
35. What did Wells do after her marriage? Why did that create a tension between her and Susan B. Anthony?
36. What were the differences between the various groups in the African-American organizations? Who were the radicals and who were the accommodationists?
37. What made Ida so powerful and so feared?
38. What organization did she follow? What was its purpose? Why was she maneuvered out of power?
39. In what other causes was she involved and what other organizations did she start?
40. What was the attitude about African-Americans at home during the war?
41. What happened in Houston? Why did Wells protest?
42. What was the incident that compelled Wells to go back to the South after thirty years?
43. What were conditions like for African-American farmers?
44. Where did Wells go directly? What did she do?
45. Why were the whites so opposed to the African-Americans unionizing?
46. What did Ida do when she got back from Chicago? What happened to the men in Arkansas?
47. Why do you think historians call Wells, “Everything we value in American heroes”? Why was so little ever known about her?