

Marcus Garvey, Part 1: Black Star Rising

Teacher's Guide

The Woodson Center's lesson on the early life and activism of Marcus Garvey affords the educator a great deal of flexibility in its implementation. The resources featured may be used to implement a lesson that is appropriate for a full or partial class session. Students will:

- Explore Garvey's life, ideas, and work through primary and secondary source documents
- Analyze and discuss essential questions
- Reflect on the lesson through persuasive writing prompts, multiple choice questions, as well as collaborative project extension activities

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to describe the:

- Social, political, and economic forces that shaped Marcus Garvey's early life in Jamaica;
- Origins of Garvey's philosophy and his Back-to-Africa movement;
- Scale and character of racial conflict in post-WWI America, including its "Red Summer";
- Foundations, purpose, and structure of the United Negro Improvement Association;
- Motivations for opposition to Garvey from other Black leaders and law enforcement;
- Importance of Harlem, New York City as a center for Black American arts and culture;
- Influence of Garvey's Pan-Africanist ideas in the wider African diaspora, and in Africa itself.

The materials in this lesson can be cut down and rearranged to suit classroom conditions, timeframe, student comfort level, or to connect with other material from an established syllabus or textbook. As either an introduction to, or an extension of, this lesson, teachers and/or students can check out the 2001 documentary *Marcus Garvey: Look for Me in the Whirlwind* and the wealth of additional resources [provided by PBS and its American Experience series](#).

Black Moses by E. David Cronon (1960) is one of the key sources for this lesson; *Negro with a Hat* by Colin Grant (2008) and *Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons* (1987), edited by Robert Hill and Barbara Blair, are also useful biographies for more advanced students and in-depth projects.

Students will be able to define the following vocabulary words, drawn from the Slide Deck, Case Studies, and Documents-Based Questions:

Afrocentrism	ascetic	charisma	charlatan	demagogue
diaspora	regalia	Pan-Africanism	provisional	

Full Class Session Instruction (1-2 class days, approximately 50 – 75 minutes per day):

1. A "bell ringer" or lesson hook is always a great way to stimulate student thinking and introduce a topic for the day's lesson. Suggested bell ringers to ask students:

- “What do phrases like ‘Black power’ or ‘Black pride’ mean to you?”
 - “What does it mean to have an identity? Why is identity important?”
 - “When you imagine the continent of Africa, what kind of pictures come to mind?”
2. The teacher should have the bell ringer displayed on the board and allow the students a few minutes to independently think about it. Next, students may turn to a peer next to them to discuss their thoughts on the opening prompt. Finally, the teacher may ask for any students to volunteer to share their thoughts with the entire class.
 3. Before moving into the Garvey lesson, ensure that students have some background about the wider context for early 20th century America: heightened racism and racial conflict, the rise of the labor movement, the effects of WWI and its political aftermath, and growing nationalist sentiment throughout the colonial world. The Library of Congress exhibit on the “Progressive Era” provides brief overviews of important social transformations from 1900 - 1929.
 4. The teacher may want to take a few minutes to discuss the history of Back-to-Africa movements, going back to the ambitions of abolitionist Paul Cuffe and the founding of the Republic of Liberia by Black American settlers; the influence of Booker T. Washington and his Tuskegee Institute on efforts toward Black empowerment and independence; and the postwar realities of the “Red Summer” of 1919 and related atrocities like the 1921 Tulsa Massacre. (Related Woodson Center curriculum lessons on these topics are suggested below.)
 5. At this point, the teacher may open the Marcus Garvey, Part 1 Slide Deck and introduce students to the story of his life, work, and legacy from his birth to the height of his powers in 1920.
 6. After reading the background story on Garvey’s life and his founding of the United Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.), the teacher may pause and ask students the following questions:
 - “Why were working-class Black Americans and West Indians attracted to Garveyism?”
 - “Which other historical figures do Marcus Garvey and his ideas bring to mind?”
 - “What motivated Garvey’s critics, since they supported other Black movements?”
 7. The next part of the lesson allows the teacher flexibility to group students together to read and to discuss the Marcus Garvey Case Studies. Each group may be assigned a particular Case Study to read and then to complete the accompanying questions. If time allows, groups may read more than one Case Study. Students can be asked to develop a group statement about the Case Study to share with the class; the statement could articulate what struck them most about the story.
 8. At this point, the teacher may want to connect Garvey’s life and ideas to current events. Discussion questions may be posed to help students understand the relevance of Garvey and U.N.I.A. to politics throughout the Black and postcolonial world today. Questions could include:
 - “What can the successes and failures of Marcus Garvey still teach us today?”
 - “The growth of the U.N.I.A. required participation and financial contributions from its members, most of whom were from modest, working-class backgrounds. What movements or organizations attract people from similar backgrounds today?”

“If Garvey and the U.N.I.A. existed today, how would they promote themselves? What would their presence be like on social media? What kind of response would they get?”

9. Lessons may conclude with an independent writing activity, e.g., a brief reflection on Garvey’s early life, or a small group discussion about the significance of his ideas during that era. Possible extensions of the lesson include answering Case Study questions, responses to the Documents Based Questions (DBQs) included as a supplement, and/or the creation of a digital trifold on Garvey’s legacy in the modern world.



Download [Documents-Based Questions](#)



Download [Projects and Activities](#)



Download [Case Studies](#) (as one document)



Download [Critical Thinking Questions](#)



Download [Slide Deck](#) (printable PDF)



Download [Multiple Choice Quiz](#)

Additional Resources

Articles & Media

Throughline: ‘Black Moses’ Lives On

Hour-long NPR program on the life and legacy of Marcus Garvey. Discusses his life and times, with special attention to his continuing influence on Black American culture, identity, and activism.

Marcus Garvey – Biography, Philosophy

Websites

Marcus Garvey: Look for Me in the Whirlwind

Companion website to the PBS American Experience documentary. Contains several articles and videos about Garvey, his ideas and projects, and the motivations of rank-and-file U.N.I.A. members.

Woodson Center Lessons

Paul Cuffe: Likely the wealthiest Black man in the early American republic, this mariner, merchant, and fervent abolitionist built the first Back-to-Africa movement with his own wealth.

54th Massachusetts: The Civil War experience shaped Black activism in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Discover the true story of all-Black regiments that produced many postwar leaders.

Booker T. Washington and the Rosenwald Schools: Another story of cooperation to solve problems, this time between the hero of Garvey’s youth, Booker T. Washington, who sought to bring schools to children in the rural South, with the Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald.

Tulsa: Terror and Triumph: In March of 1921, the Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa, Oklahoma was one of wealthiest Black communities in America, famous for its “Black Wall Street” of Black-owned businesses and cultural attractions. But one night of racist violence destroyed it all. In the weeks and years that followed, the people of Greenwood came together and rebuilt their home.

Standards & Learning Objectives

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

CIVICS

D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

D2.Civ.6.9-12. Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets.

D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles.

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

GEOGRAPHY

D2.Geo.5.9-12. Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.

D2.Geo.7.9-12. Analyze the reciprocal nature of how historical events and the spatial diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices have influenced migration patterns and the distribution of human population.

D2.Geo.8.9-12. Evaluate the impact of economic activities and political decisions on spatial patterns within and among urban, suburban, and rural regions.

HISTORY

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.15.9-12. Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.

D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

ELA

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).

D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

AP U.S. HISTORY

Theme 1: American and National Identity NAT

Theme 2: Work, Exchange and Technology (WXT)

Theme 4: Migration and Settlement (MIG)

Theme 5: Politics and Power PCE

Theme 7: American and Regional Culture ARC

Theme 8: Social Structures SOC



4.B Explain how a specific historical development or process is situated within a broader historical context.

KC-6.1.II.C

Labor and management battled over wages and working conditions, with workers organizing local and national unions and/or directly confronting business leaders.

KC-6.1.II.B.ii

The industrial workforce expanded and became more diverse through internal and international migration.

KC-6.2.I.B

Urban neighborhoods based on particular ethnicities, races, and classes provided new cultural opportunities for city dwellers.

KC-6.3.I.C

A number of artists and critics, including agrarians, utopians, socialists, and advocates of the Social Gospel, championed alternative visions for the economy and U.S. society.

KC-6.2

The migrations that accompanied industrialization transformed both urban and rural areas of the United States and caused dramatic social and cultural change.

KC-6.2.I

International and internal migration increased urban populations and fostered the growth of a new urban culture.

KC-7.1.I

The United States continued its transition from a rural, agricultural economy to an urban, industrial economy led by large companies.

KC-7.2.I.C

Official restrictions on freedom of speech grew during World War I, as increased anxiety about radicalism led to a Red Scare and attacks on labor activism and immigrant culture.

KC-7.2.II.C

In the Great Migration during and after World War I, African Americans escaping segregation, racial violence, and limited economic opportunity in the South moved to the North and West, where they found new opportunities but still encountered discrimination.



KC-7.2.I.B

Migration gave rise to new forms of art and literature that expressed ethnic and regional identities, such as the Harlem Renaissance movement.

KC-7.2.I.D

In the 1920s, cultural and political controversies emerged as Americans debated gender roles, modernism, science, religion, and issues related to race and immigration.

AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

- 4.A Develop a paragraph that includes a claim and evidence supporting the claim.
- 4.B Write a thesis statement that requires proof or defense and that may preview the structure.
- 4.C Qualify a claim using modifiers, counterarguments, or alternative perspectives
- 6.A Develop a line of reasoning and commentary that explains it throughout an argument.
- 6.B Use transitional elements to guide the reader through the line of reasoning of an argument.
- 6.C Use appropriate methods of development to advance an argument.
- 8.B Write sentences that clearly convey ideas and arguments.
- 8.C Use established conventions of grammar and mechanics to communicate clearly and effectively.