

CHAPTER
8

GUIDED READING *Expanding Public Education*

Section 2

A. As you read this section, write notes to describe the chief characteristics of each type of educational institution and the developments that took place at the turn of the 20th century.

Chief Characteristics and Important Developments	
1. Elementary schools	
2. High schools	
3. Colleges and universities	
4. Education for immigrant adults	

B. On the back of this paper, briefly describe the contribution of each of the following people to American education during this time.

W. E. B. Du Bois Booker T. Washington Henry Ford

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Section 2

RETEACHING ACTIVITY *Expanding Public Education*

Finding Main Ideas

The following questions deal with reforms in public education. Answer them in the space provided.

1. Why did education become more important during the industrial age?

2. Why were many immigrants encouraged to go to school?

3. How did the nation's high schools change during the late 1800s and early 1900s?

4. How did college curricula change during the turn of the century?

5. How did African Americans pursue higher education despite their exclusion from white institutions?

6. How did Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois differ in their views on education for African Americans?

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PRIMARY SOURCE *from* “The Talented Tenth”
by W. E. B. Du Bois

W. E. B. Du Bois believed that the educated African Americans of his day—the “Talented Tenth”—would save the race by setting an example to whites and uplifting other African Americans. As you read this excerpt from Du Bois’s essay, think about whether you agree or disagree with the theory that he puts forth.

The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races. Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men. Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools—intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it—this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life. On this foundation we may build bread winning, skill of hand and quickness of brain, with never a fear lest the child and man mistake the means of living for the object of life. . . .

Can the masses of the Negro people be in any possible way more quickly raised than by the effort and example of this aristocracy of talent and character? Was there ever a nation on God’s fair earth civilized from the bottom upward? Never; it is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters. The Talented Tenth rises and pulls all that are worth the saving up to their vantage ground. This is the history of human progress; and the two historic mistakes which have hindered that progress were the thinking first that no more could ever rise save the few already risen; or second, that it would better the unrisen to pull the risen down.

How then shall the leaders of a struggling people be trained and the hands of the risen few strengthened? There can be but one answer: The best and most capable of their youth must be schooled in the colleges and universities of the land. We will not quarrel as to just what the

university of the Negro should teach or how it should teach it—I willingly admit that each soul and each race-soul needs its own peculiar curriculum. But this is true: A university is a human invention for the transmission of knowledge and culture from generation to generation, through the training of quick minds and pure hearts, and for this work no other human invention will suffice, not even trade and industrial schools. . . .

Men of America, the problem is plain before you. Here is a race transplanted through the criminal foolishness of your fathers. Whether you like it or not the millions are here, and here they will remain. If you do not lift them up, they will pull you down. Education and work are the levers to uplift a people. Work alone will not do it unless inspired by the right ideals and guided by intelligence. Education must not simply teach work—it must teach Life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train men for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.

*from W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth,” in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today* (New York: James Pott, 1903), 33–75.*

Research Options

1. Imagine that you have been asked to introduce a speaker at an education conference: Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois. Find out more about Du Bois and then write a brief introduction based on your findings.
2. Du Bois believed education was a lever “to uplift a people.” Find recent statistics about the number of African-American college graduates. Then compare these figures with the number of African-American college graduates—3,880—in 1900.

CHAPTER
8

AMERICAN LIVES **W. E. B. Du Bois**
Scholar, Activist, Critic

Section 2

“The world was thinking wrong about race because it did not know. The ultimate evil was stupidity. The cure for it was knowledge based on scientific investigation.”—W. E. B. Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn (1940)

W. E. B. Du Bois’s ideas evolved over his long career. In one thing, however, he was constant. He wanted to highlight the contributions and condition of African Americans because, he once said, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.”

Du Bois (1868–1963), born in Massachusetts, received a shock when he reached Fisk University, an all-black college in Nashville, Tennessee. There he experienced for the first time segregation in the South. He later wrote that only an African American “going into the South for the first time can have any conception of [segregation’s] barbarism.” After graduation from Fisk, he attended Harvard University, where he learned to question accepted ideas.

Du Bois began to teach while he continued work for his Ph.D., which he was awarded in 1895. In his doctoral dissertation, he argued that the slave trade was ended not for moral reasons, but for economic ones. A brilliant study, it made his name as a scholar. Du Bois’s next book, *The Philadelphia Negro*, was an equally impressive work of sociology. In it, Du Bois argued forcefully against the idea—quite common at the time—that racial differences were based on genetic traits.

By the turn of the century, Du Bois began a period of political activism. Joining with 28 other African-American intellectuals, he founded the Niagara Movement. This group rejected the views of Booker T. Washington, a leading African American. Washington urged blacks to pursue job training and use economic advances to secure political rights. The Niagara Movement disagreed, flatly stating, “We want full manhood suffrage and we want it now.” Du Bois criticized Washington even though Atlanta University, where he worked, depended on financial aid from Washington supporters.

This movement was taken into the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, formed in 1909. Du Bois left Atlanta University to become editor of the NAACP’s jour-

nal, *Crisis*. He held the position for 25 years and used it to protest lynching and the denial of rights to African Americans, to celebrate the achievements of African culture, and to promote African-American art. From time to time, he took positions opposed by the NAACP.

One cause of these differences was Du Bois’s broadening views and growing socialism. World War I convinced him that the root of African Americans’ problems was white imperialism. Slavery and segregation, in this view, were just one aspect of this imperialism, which was also suppressing people of color around the world. Du Bois also began to believe that economic condition determined political status. He urged African Americans to adopt economic segregation from mainstream American life. The NAACP, though, supported integration. Eventually, these differences led him to resign from editing *Crisis*.

Du Bois still had almost three decades of work remaining. In his later writings, he continued to broaden his concern to include the oppressed around the world, especially people of color. He defined Karl Marx’s term—the proletariat—as more than just white laborers in Europe and America. This class was “overwhelmingly of the darker workers of Asia, Africa, the islands of the sea, and South Central America . . . who are supporting a superstructure of wealth, luxury, and extravagance.” His radical views led to his arrest in the anticommunist hysteria of the 1950s. But Du Bois refused to stop speaking out. In his last major work, a three-novel series called *The Black Flame*, he used fiction to analyze the African-American experience from the end of Reconstruction to the postwar period.

Questions

1. Why was Du Bois startled when he went to Fisk University?
2. What incidents show Du Bois’s independence of mind?
3. How did Du Bois’s ideas change over time?