Legal segregation adopted during the Jim Crow era was not the kind of freedom Black Americans fought for during the Civil War. In the 1890s, African American leaders differed on the best way of uplifting African Americans. Compare the analysis of Booker T. Washington, a former slave, with W. E. B. DuBois, a distinguished, Fisk and Harvard educated sociologist and social investigator, and with Ida Wells-Barnett, crusader against lynching.

1. Why do you suppose Washington’s speech was called the “Atlanta Compromise Speech.” Who were the two parties to the “compromise” that Booker T. Washington proposed? What would each side get and give up? Was this a genuine compromise? Did it confront Jim Crow?

2. What does this important text tell us about how Washington thought Blacks could rise in American society? Whom, or what, did Washington blame for black “backwardness?” What kind of freedom should they aspire to? What kind of assistance did they need? Were they ready for social and political equality?

3. What was wrong with Washington’s plan, according to DuBois? How would Washington’s strategy affect the republican virtue of Blacks? What rights and status should Blacks demand, and on what basis? Did he agree with BTW that their own false aspirations and bad habits held Blacks down? What did DuBois see as the special responsibilities of educated blacks, not only to other members of their own race but to their country?

4. Lynching became almost exclusively a Southern crime in the Jim Crow era. How did Ida B. Wells-Barnett account for the mass assault on Blacks one “bloody week” in New Orleans during 1892? What actions and motives did she ascribe to Robert Charles, whose resistance to police brutality triggered the attacks on the Negro community? to the white mob? Why did she try so hard to learn what kind of person Charles had been? What racial stereotypes did she think were routinely used to justify lynching, and how did she confront them? What if anything did she have in common with white progressives such as Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, and Margaret Byington?

5. In Giddings’ piece, how do Terrell and especially Wells confront not only lynching but the racial and gender stereotypes of white society? What “objectivity” and “subjective” necessities made these two women reformers? Are we correct to think of lynching as a form of terrorism?