Grossman, “Bound for the Promised Land,” *Land of Hope*
Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”

Study Questions

1. Grossman’s *Land of Hope* describes a veritable torrent of Black Americans who poured out of the South, often abandoning houses, crops, and leaving whole streets and churches empty, the minute World War I opened opportunities up North. Why did they go in such numbers, and in such a hurry? What does this tell us about conditions for Blacks in the South during the early 20th century? What does it tell us about the North?

2. Although black migrants faced hardships aplenty, they were not without resources, or without assistance from established institutions in the North. Who helped them? Who resisted their departure, how, and why? What do these methods of holding blacks in the South tell us about reasons for leaving?

3. Throughout this course, we have paid attention to the impact of living arrangements and working conditions on families. How were typical families affected by the Great Black migration? In what ways was their experience similar to and different from what European peasant immigrants face on the Atlantic crossing?

4. Grossman stresses that no matter how hard it was for Blacks to leave their Southern homes, doing so was a liberation. If they were leaving behind “a doom,” as one migrant said, could he truly say that “fear, hatred, and violence” was “all behind me now?”

5. Although Chicago had its own unwritten racial code, in what respects would you agree with the migrant who thought of it as “a real place for Negroes?”

6. Was it a “real place” as well for the young generation of Negro artists in the 1920s? What pitfalls and dangers did Langston Hughes see facing them? What sort of spiritual “great migration” did Hughes believe would take Black artists to the top of the mountain?

Discussion: Why did Hughes feel ashamed of the young black man who wanted to be “a poet, not a Negro poet?” How do you feel about Hughes’s rejection of the young poet’s ambition, and his caustic criticisms of the black middle class? What role do you think he saw for art in the liberation of oppressed peoples? How do his ideas compare with those of Washington and DuBois? Is Hughes a black nationalist? Do you agree with his approach?