

Idlewild Memories

Note to teachers: This supplement includes a discussion guide, lessons and Michigan Content Standards to use with the Michigan Time Traveler page. You may reproduce the pages in this supplement to use with students.

MASTERY QUESTIONS:

(SOC 1.1 Time and Chronology; SOC. 1.2 Comprehending the Past; SOC 1.3 Analyzing and Interpreting the Past)

- **Idlewild or Black Eden:** What was Idlewild? Why was it established? Who went there?
- **An Entertainer's Memories:** Who was Carlean Gill? What did she do?
- **A Vacationer's Memories:** Who was Harry Solomon?
- **Idlewild Time Line:** When was Idlewild founded? What year did the Civil Rights Act pass?

WORDS TO DISCUSS AND LEARN:

Segregation: the policy of keeping racial groups separate from each other

Racism: the belief—not based on fact—that teaches the superiority of one race over another

Discrimination: showing preference for one group of people over another

Chautauqua: an institution that flourished in the late 19th and early 20th centuries providing popular education, combining entertainment with lectures, concerts and plays presented outdoors or in a tent.

ACTIVITY ONE: What Did the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Do?

(SOC 1.1 Time and Chronology; SOC 1.2 Comprehending the Past; SOC III.1 Purposes of Government; SOC III, 2 Ideals of American Democracy)

Discuss: Idlewild was created in response to segregation, discrimination and racism. Idlewild provided black Americans a safe haven to vacation and feel good about themselves. They could direct, produce and attend shows. At the time, black Americans did not have the opportunities that white Americans had.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made segregation illegal.

- Have students read the preamble to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in “Beyond Idlewild” (page 3).
- Ask them how this new law supported Core Democratic Values: equality, diversity, common good, justice, patriotism, individual rights, truth, and popular sovereignty (government by the people).
- Ask them how this change affected Idlewild.
- Discuss how something good can also cause changes we may not like—such as the demise of Idlewild.
- For more information and activities about the 1960s and the Civil Rights movement go to the Michigan Historical Museum's Web site: **The 1960s** <http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/museum/explore/museums/hismus/1900-75/sixties/index.html>.
- For a complete copy of this public act, see: <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/civilr19.htm>.

ACTIVITY TWO: Who Are Your Heroes?

(SOC 1.2 Comprehending the Past; SOC 1.4 Judging Decisions from the Past; ELA 10 Ideas in Action)

Discuss: Heroes can be people we know personally, or they can be famous people we do not know. Discuss with students the kinds of character traits their heroes have. Who has influenced them and why? Ask them to give specific examples of how their heroes have influenced them.

Part I: Have students read “Carlean Gill's Story Continues” in “Beyond Idlewild,” (page 3). Based on the first part of the story in the newspaper and this selection, ask students to describe Carlean Gill.

- What kind of person is she? Compare her characteristics to their list of heroes' character traits.
- Do they think she was successful? As a young woman? As an older woman? Why or Why not?
- What were the ingredients that led her to success? Who motivated her?
- What were some of the major decisions she made in her life? How did each decision lead to the next?

Part II: Ask students to write a story about one of their heroes. Have them be specific about the characteristics of that hero and how that hero influences them.

ACTIVITY THREE: Biography and Autobiography

(SOC 1.2 Comprehending the Past; ELA 2 Meaning and Communication; Reading; ELA 6 Voice; ELA 11 Inquiry and Research)

Discuss: A **biography** is the history of a person's life written by someone else. An **autobiography** is the story of a person writes about his or her own life.

Part I: Have students research on the Web or in the library one of the famous people who went to Idlewild and ask them to write a short biography. These people include:

- W.E.B. Dubois, writer and cofounder the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, first American physician to perform open-heart surgery
- Musicians: Sammy Davis, Jr., The Four Tops, Della Reese, Aretha Franklin, Bill Cosby, Duke Ellington, Stevie Wonder, Sarah Vaughan, The Temptations, Louis Armstrong
- Athletes: Joe Louis, Boxer; Sugar Ray Robinson, Wilt Chamberlain

Part II: Ask students to write an autobiographical sketch about themselves. Ask them to write about their family, their interests and how they like to spend their time.

ACTIVITY FOUR: Homes, Grocery Stores and Post Offices: Then and Now

(SOC.II.2 Human/Environment Interaction; AE 2 Creating)

Discuss: Most houses that were built at Idlewild were small **bungalow** cottages. A bungalow is a one-story or one and a half story design with a broad, low gabled roof with wide overhanging eaves typical of the 1920s and 1930s.

Part I:

- Pass out page four of this guide with the photographs of a bungalow, the post office and a grocery store in Idlewild. Discuss the appearance and characteristics of these buildings with students. See how many details they notice when studying the photographs—gas pump, signs, windows, building shapes. Ask them to describe the buildings to each other.
- Review Harry Solomon's memories of Idlewild.
- Then, have students draw a picture of what they think Idlewild looked like based on these photos and the photographs in the newspaper and on the stories they read.

Part II: Have students research their homes and find out as much as they can:

- Do they live in an apartment? House? Duplex? Condominium? Mobile Home?
- What year was their home built?
- How many rooms are in their home?
- How many floors are there?
- From what are the floors made? Wood? Linoleum? Tiles? Cement?
- What is on the outside of their home? Brick? Wood? Aluminum siding?
- How many doors do they have to enter their home? Inside their homes?
- How many windows do they have? How do they open?

Part III: Have a discussion about the grocery store at Idlewild and the grocery store or supermarket where their families usually shop. What are the differences between grocery stores and supermarkets? Are the grocery stores in their community similar or different to each other and to the one in Idlewild? How? Then have them draw a picture of their grocery store.

Part IV: For an activity that lets students practice measuring and drawing to scale by creating floor plans of their classroom or drawing their dream house floor plan, check out the Michigan Historical Museum's Web site activity: **Bungalow Floor Plans – Lesson Plan** http://www.michigan.gov/hal/0,1607,7-160-17451_18670_18793-53468--,00.html.

BEYOND IDLEWILD

Preamble to the Civil Rights Act of 1964

“To enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes.”

Carlean Gill’s Story Continues

Carlean Gill has followed her dreams throughout her life and has always tried to do her best. When Idlewild was closed during the year and she wasn’t traveling with the Idlewild Revue, Carlean returned home to Saginaw and went to the All American Beauty School.

My Mom said, “You’re not always going to be beautiful. You will need a certificate.” In those days it was popular to go to nursing school or beauty school. I wanted to go to beauty school because I could be my own boss. I graduated from beauty school, worked with a lady for year, built up a clientele and opened up my own salon. My mother always told me, “Whatever you do, try to be the best at it.”

I then got my certificate and learned how to weave false hair. I went into competitions and won in Austin, Texas and Hawaii. I changed my salon and opened a salon for people who wear hair replacements. I work with cancer patients who have lost their hair. I have worked all over the United States. I’ve been to Paris, Milan and Seoul. Each time I go somewhere, I study what others do.

Then, I decided I wanted to open up my own beauty school. I tried to open one three times over twenty years. On the fourth time I tried, I opened up my school in 1989. I teach cosmetology. We specialize in all fields—manicures, hair coloring, facials. We have a contract with the public school system in Saginaw. Most students who attend my school come from the public schools in 11th and 12th grades.

One day I was doing a lady’s hair and was telling her how I wanted to go to Africa, and then one day I got a call from Africa. A beautician from Zimbabwe found my name and school on the Web and e-mailed me. “I’m trying to open a school. Could you please come and help me?” I finally found a ticket for \$1,200. I wrote to her and told her I could come, but I couldn’t stay in a hotel. She wrote back saying I could stay with her. I had a party and my friends came. They gave me books to carry and money to take to Zimbabwe. It was a godsend. So, I went to Zimbabwe, and we started a sister school there. Then there was fighting in Zimbabwe, and my new friend in Zimbabwe came and stayed with me for three months. Now she’s in London setting up a school there.

Photographs of Idlewild c 1935



Buster Henderson's cottage, Idlewild, MI



Idlewild Post Office



Log Cabin Store, Idlewild

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