

Reading Intervention: Marcus Garvey and the Power of Knowing Your Roots

Part 1: Who Was Marcus Garvey?

Marcus Garvey was a powerful voice for Black pride, self-reliance, and unity. Born in **St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica**, in **1887**, he grew up during a time when Black people around the world faced extreme racism, poverty, and injustice. Garvey's parents encouraged him to read and learn, which helped him understand the history of African people and the struggles they faced after slavery and colonialism.

When Garvey was young, he worked as a printer and traveled to countries in **Central America, South America, and Europe**. Everywhere he went, he saw that Black people were treated unfairly. This fueled his desire to fight for justice. He believed that Black people needed to unite, celebrate their heritage, and build strong communities.

In 1914, Garvey founded the **Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)**. The UNIA grew into an international movement with **millions of members** across the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe. Garvey gave powerful speeches about Black pride and self-sufficiency. He encouraged people to:

- **Take pride in their African heritage**
- **Support Black-owned businesses**
- **Build strong, independent communities**
- **Never be ashamed of who they are**

Garvey believed that Black people should not rely on others for their success. Instead, they should rely on themselves, their communities, and their shared history.

Part 2: The “Back to Africa” Movement

One of Garvey's most famous ideas was the “**Back to Africa**” movement. This didn't mean that every Black person should literally move to Africa. Instead, Garvey wanted people to reconnect with their **African roots, culture, and history**.

At the time, many people in the U.S. and the Caribbean were made to feel ashamed of their African heritage. Garvey believed that this was wrong. He wanted Black people to feel proud of who they were. His message was simple but powerful:

“A people without knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.”

Garvey’s movement inspired hope and pride. He even created a shipping company called the **Black Star Line**, which was supposed to help connect African people around the world through business and travel. Although the company faced financial struggles and eventually failed, it was a symbol of Garvey’s belief in Black self-determination.

Part 3: Marcus Garvey’s Legacy

Marcus Garvey’s ideas didn’t die when he passed away in **1940**. In fact, his message of pride and unity inspired many future leaders, including:

- **Martin Luther King Jr.**, who fought for civil rights in the U.S.
- **Malcolm X**, whose parents were Garvey supporters and who promoted Black pride.
- **Nelson Mandela**, who fought against apartheid in South Africa.

Today, Garvey is remembered as a leader who encouraged people to be proud of their identity. His work helped spark the **Pan-African movement**, which connects people of African descent worldwide.

Part 4: Why Does Knowing Your Family History Matter?

Marcus Garvey believed that understanding your history gives you **power**. But history isn’t just about famous leaders—it’s also about **your family’s story**. This is called **genealogy**, which means studying your family’s history to learn where you come from.

When you learn about your ancestors, you discover:

- **Who they were:** Their names, jobs, cultures, and traditions
- **Where they came from:** Countries, cities, or villages
- **What they experienced:** Struggles, achievements, and life lessons

Knowing your family history helps you feel connected to something bigger than yourself. Even if you don’t know much about your family, small details—like where your grandparents lived or a story passed down from a relative—can be powerful.

Activity: Create Your Own Family Tree

Step 1: Think Back

- Who are the people in your family that you know?
- What stories have you heard about your family's past?

Step 2: Fill Out Your Family Tree

- Start with *your name* at the bottom.
- Add your parents above you, then your grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on.
- Include siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins if you'd like.
- If you don't know certain names, that's okay—leave them blank or write "Unknown."

Step 3: Reflection Questions

- What did you learn about your family while making your tree?
- How does knowing your family history help you understand more about yourself?
- How do you think Marcus Garvey's message about pride connects to learning about your own roots?

Comprehension Questions (Multiple Choice)

1. Where was Marcus Garvey born?
 - a) The United States
 - b) Jamaica
 - c) South Africa
 - d) Ghana
2. What was the purpose of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)?
 - a) To start businesses for wealthy people
 - b) To encourage Black pride and self-reliance
 - c) To send people back to school
 - d) To create new laws in Africa
3. What did Marcus Garvey mean by the "Back to Africa" movement?
 - a) That everyone should move to Africa
 - b) That people should reconnect with their African heritage
 - c) That people should forget their history
 - d) That Africa was the only place to find success
4. What is genealogy?
 - a) The study of science
 - b) The study of family history
 - c) A special type of map
 - d) A new language
5. Why do you think Marcus Garvey believed that knowing your roots gives you power?
 - a) Because it helps people win arguments
 - b) Because it teaches you how to build businesses
 - c) Because it helps people feel proud, confident, and connected to their identity
 - d) Because it makes you famous