



Mary McLeod Bethune Printable Reading Comprehension

Word Count: 318 | Lexile 1000

Early Life

Mary McLeod Bethune was born on July 10, 1875, in Mayesville, South Carolina. She was the 15th of 17 children in a family of former slaves. Even though her family was poor, they valued education. Mary walked several miles each day to attend a one-room school, where she quickly learned to read and write. Education became her passion, and she believed it could change lives.

Education and Career

Mary attended Scotia Seminary in North Carolina and then Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. She dreamed of becoming a missionary in Africa, but that dream didn't come true. Instead, she became an educator in the United States. In 1904, she started the Daytona Educational and Industrial School for Negro Girls in Florida. The school began with only five students and little money, but it grew into Bethune-Cookman University.

Leadership and Activism

Bethune worked hard to improve the lives of African Americans, especially women and children. She founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935 to fight for equality and opportunities. She believed in the power of women to lead and make change. Her leadership gained national attention, and she became a trusted advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Government Service and Legacy

During the 1930s and 1940s, Mary served as an advisor in the Roosevelt administration. She worked on programs to help African Americans during the Great Depression and supported civil rights. People called her "The First Lady of the Struggle" because of her fight for justice and education. Mary McLeod Bethune died on May 18, 1955, but her legacy lives on in schools, programs, and organizations named after her.

PAGE 2 – Questions

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. Mary Bethune was the first African American woman to attend college.
- B. Mary Bethune devoted her life to education and civil rights.
- C. Mary Bethune became a missionary in Africa and helped poor families.
- D. Mary Bethune fought for equality but never worked with the government.

2. Which detail best supports the idea that education was important to Mary's family?

- A. Her family was poor and lived in South Carolina.
- B. Mary dreamed of becoming a missionary in Africa.
- C. She walked several miles each day to attend school.
- D. She started a school in Florida in 1904.

3. Why do people call Mary McLeod Bethune “The First Lady of the Struggle”?

- A. She was the first African American woman elected to Congress.
- B. She fought for justice and education for African Americans.
- C. She was a missionary who traveled around the world.
- D. She started the first college in the South.

4. How does the author show that Mary was determined to succeed despite challenges?

- A. By telling how she was one of 17 children.
- B. By explaining that she started a school with very little money.
- C. By describing her work with President Roosevelt.
- D. By stating that she believed in the power of women.

5. Which two sections of the passage show the greatest contrast in Mary's life?

- A. Early Life and Government Service and Legacy
- B. Education and Career and Leadership and Activism
- C. Early Life and Education and Career
- D. Leadership and Activism and Government Service and Legacy

6. Which statement is an inference based on the passage?

- A. Mary believed women could make positive changes in society.
- B. Mary traveled to Africa as a missionary.
- C. Mary thought education was not important for children.
- D. Mary only helped women and ignored children.

7. Which sentence best summarizes Mary's accomplishments?

- A. Mary McLeod Bethune overcame poverty, founded a school, and became a national leader for civil rights and education.
- B. Mary McLeod Bethune attended school in North Carolina and wanted to go to Africa.
- C. Mary McLeod Bethune was born after the Civil War and later met President Roosevelt.
- D. Mary McLeod Bethune helped African Americans during the Great Depression and retired quietly.

Answer Key

1. **B** – Mary Bethune devoted her life to education and civil rights.
2. **C** – She walked several miles each day to attend school.
3. **B** – She fought for justice and education for African Americans.
4. **B** – By explaining that she started a school with very little money.
5. **A** – Early Life and Government Service and Legacy.
6. **A** – Mary believed women could make positive changes in society.
7. **A** – Mary McLeod Bethune overcame poverty, founded a school, and became a national leader for civil rights and education.