

“The Origins of Lynching Culture”

After viewing the video “The Origins of Lynching Culture,” take a few moments to record your thoughts and feelings about what you saw in your journal. Then use the following questions to guide your note-taking and reflection.

1. What is the legal definition of lynching? What constitutes a mob?
2. What action did the NAACP take against lynching in the 1920s?
3. How did the majority of lynching victims before 1890 differ from the majority after that year?
4. What is one of the functions of a racial stereotype, according to Paula Giddings? How do stereotypes relate to “first-class” citizenship?
5. How does Giddings distinguish between rights and privileges? Is “first-class” citizenship a right or a privilege?
6. How did prejudices toward black Americans change in the late nineteenth century? How was science used to justify those prejudices?
7. What myths and fears were used to justify the lynching of black men?
8. What experiences influenced Ida B. Wells to challenge the custom of lynching?
9. What strategy did Wells use to challenge the practice and disprove the myths used to justify it?
10. According to Wells’s observations, what were the real reasons that blacks were being lynched? What is the reality that her work uncovered about the relationships that black lynching victims typically had with white women?
11. What does Giddings define as the primary function that lynching played in Jim Crow society?