

Jim Crow Reading

Name:

Date:

1. Briefly describe life in the rural south during the early 1900s.

2. How did the children get to school? What was a cozy cab and when was it used?
3. Where was the closest hospital to the author?
4. Describe at least two hardships discussed by the author about living so far from the city.
5. Who was Fanny? What was her role in the family?
6. Where does the author claim her father's prejudice beliefs came from?
7. How was the author's father taught to think about Abraham Lincoln?
8. According to the author, how did society teach people to treat black citizens?
9. What state does the author say did not have Jim Crow Laws?
10. Describe the author's view on Annie and Fanny with regards to their importance to the family?
11. How did Jim Crow Laws change society in the late 1800s?
12. What was the ruling in the Supreme Court Case Plessy vs. Ferguson? What was the overall impact of this case on society?
13. Along with African Americans, what other group of people received prejudice and discrimination? Why was this group hated so much?

Growing up white in the Jim Crow South:
**"My father was brought up to think that the devil was the worst person on earth,
 and Abraham Lincoln was number two"**

I grew up on a farm in the country, outside of Danville, Kentucky. Of course we didn't have running water out there, nor electricity. They had them in town, but out on our farm it was just gas or kerosene lights, a well with a pump, and an outhouse. And we had to cook on a coal and wood stove. My mother used to take my sister and me to school every morning in a horse and buggy — four miles each way. It got awfully cold in the winter in Kentucky, so we rode in what was known as a cozy cab. That was a buggy that had an enclosed top on it with glass windows all around. And there was a little slot for the reins to come through. It was supposed to be much warmer than the buggy with just curtains buckled on, but it could still get pretty cold. Sometimes we'd put hot bricks in the bottom of the cab to try and keep our feet warm.

We had to go into town for everything that we didn't already have on the farm. My father even had to ride into the little village store to pick up the mail. That's where the post office was, in the back of the village store. We were pretty cut off from things out there. When I was seven years old, my mother became gravely ill. There wasn't a hospital in Danville back then; the closest one was in Louisville, about seventy miles away. My mother was so sick that she couldn't be moved, so our family doctor came in from town and operated on her right in our house. My father stood right there and held the lamp so the doctor could see what he was doing. My mother never recovered. Living out in the country most definitely had its hardships.

I remember coming home from school one day to find that my father had had a phone put in. I mean, there were phones in town at that time, but out in the country, it was still quite unusual. I was so excited, I just couldn't wait to call a friend of mine who lived in Danville. That was the first time I ever talked on a telephone. Of course it was a party line, so if one of our neighbors was already on it, we had to wait till they got off. Even so, just having a phone made it feel as though things were really changing.

We had a cook named Fanny. Her husband, George, worked on the farm, tending to the milking and working the garden. Fanny was a large colored woman who used to joke around with my sister and me quite a bit. When she made us waffles, or berry cakes, or something that we liked a lot, why, we'd jump down from the table and run to the kitchen and say, "Oh, Fanny, I ate three. I ate three." And she'd look down at us with this stern face and say, "Well, you two go on back in there and eat three more!" She was a good jolly person. And we loved her. She loved to play cards. She had this old



Cash (center) with her sisters Eoline (left) and Katherine in 1904.

—Minor Cash was born in 1901 in Richmond, Kentucky. After attending Colorado State University, Kentucky Wesleyan, and Berea College, she taught high school English and social studies in Stanford, Kentucky, until she retired in 1962.

beat-up deck and she could play for hours. But my sister and I were never allowed to play with her. So when my father wasn't looking, we'd slip out to the cabin where she lived and play with those crazy old dirty cards that Fanny had.

My father was always kind of prejudiced against black people. A lot of that was passed down to him from his family. They lived near Fredericksburg, Virginia, during the Civil War, and the Union Army was just tearing things up around there. At one point things got really bad and they had to move. My father's oldest brother, who was just a boy, was sent out with one of the Negro servants to hide the horses. But instead of taking the horses and my father's brother away from danger, the servant took him right toward the Union Army. They met the army right at a bridge, and the soldiers threatened to throw the boy in the creek. Somehow he got away, but it scared him to death. Of course, my father's family believed that that servant led that boy to

the Union Army on purpose. They eventually made their way to Georgia, but got there just about the time that Sherman marched through and destroyed everything. My father said that he was brought up to think that the Devil was the worst person on earth, and Abraham Lincoln was number two.

But when I was growing up in Kentucky I never noticed anything like racial tension. I never heard of anybody not getting along. Of course in Kentucky we had separate facilities for blacks and for whites. There were Jim Crow laws. The philosophy was that it was right to be friendly, but the blacks must stay in their place. And they had a definite place. They didn't go to our churches. They didn't go to our schools. And they had a certain area that they lived in — the Negro section. Jim Crow didn't apply everywhere; it was a state law. Ohio, just to the north, didn't have Jim Crow. I remember being in Cincinnati once and thinking that it was strange to see Negroes getting on the train along with whites. You just didn't see that in Kentucky. From the time I was born, the blacks and whites were kept separate. I didn't know any different.

I didn't feel as though I had any prejudices. There was no need for them, you see. It was all right for me to play with black children. I could associate that way. Fanny had a little girl, named Annie, and we used to run together all the time. We were buddies. We used to go out and play a game called Annie Over. That's where we would get on opposite sides of a build-

ing and then try and throw a ball over the roof to the other person. And we'd yell "Annie Over!" as we threw. You couldn't see the ball coming till it got over the peak and then you had to try and catch it. One day I got stung by a bumblebee and I cried and screamed and carried on. And my mother came out and doctored me, but I kept on crying. She asked, "Why are you still carrying on like that?" And I said, "I'm crying 'cause the bee didn't sting Annie, too." I thought that if I got stung, then Annie should get stung, too.

Annie and Fanny and George were like part of the family. I just loved them. But then my father sold the farm and we moved to a county in Kentucky where there were very few colored people. Fanny and her family came along with us, but they felt really out of place there. They stayed for a little while, but eventually packed up and left and moved to a place where they were more at home. I was very sad to see my friends go. From then on we always had white help.