

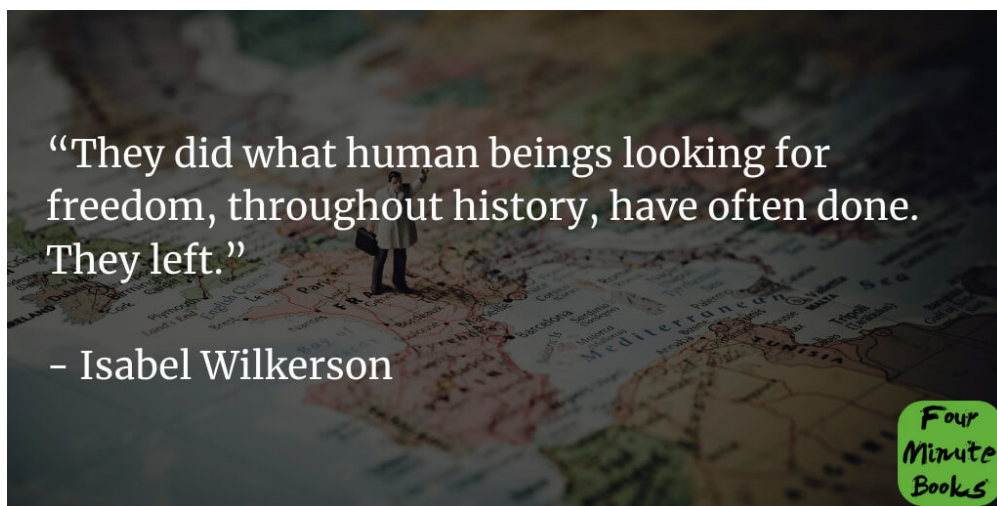
The Warmth Of Other Suns Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Warmth Of Other Suns* is the story of how and why millions of Black Americans left the South between 1915 and 1970 to escape the brutality of the Jim Crow Laws and find safety, better pay, and more freedom in what is known today as The Great Migration.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Throughout the history of the United States, there have been many migrations within the US of people searching for a better life. A couple examples include the Gold Rush and the Dust Bowl Migration. But there is one migration so massive that it dwarfs all of the others in comparison: The Great Migration.

During the Great Migration, an estimated six million African Americans left their homes in the South in search of a better life in the North. The migration, which happened between 1915 and 1970, was arguably one of the greatest demographic shifts in American History.

In *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* by Isabel Wilkerson, we dive into the riveting truth behind what drove this mass relocation. Through three separate first-hand accounts of black Americans, Wilkerson brings us an intimate look at the fears, hopes, and dreams they had. We will focus on Ida Mae Gladley's story.

Here are just 3 of the many lessons I got from this book:

1. The Great Migration happened for many different reasons, and people left from and went to diverse places throughout it.

2. Ida Mae and her family were just one example of a black family leaving the South to become safer and earn more money.
3. Settling in Chicago, Ida Mae entered the workforce but like many others didn't see all of the benefits that she had hoped that moving would bring.

Let's dive right into this little known history lesson!

Lesson 1: The Great Migration is an interesting and neglected piece of US history that involved many purposes and destinations.

You might be little surprised that your US History class didn't study this big migration. Why did we barely touch on this topic that affected our history so greatly?

Wilkerson says that there are a few reasons for this. One of the main reasons is that it wasn't one single unified movement. These black southerners didn't think of themselves as part of a movement because many of them had their own complex reasons for moving.

Some of them were tired of being second-class. Others felt scared of racial violence. And some went for the promises of job prospects or tales of freedom. **But the most dominant reason they wanted to leave was to escape the racist Jim Crow laws.**

After the abolishment of slavery in 1865, whites came up with different ways to keep blacks from using their newly won freedoms. These laws banned them from going to the same schools or shops as white people, for example. It also gave whites an excuse to mob lynch blacks.

Another factor that influenced the migration was World War I. The war caused a huge labor shortage in the North. This meant there was a big recruitment of black workers who would work for cheaper from the South. This peaked again during World War II.

Lesson 2: Ida Mae and her family's move from the South for better pay and safety is just one story of many in The Great Migration.

Ida Mae lived on a farm with her family in Mississippi. In 1928, she married a fellow farmer named George and the young couple began their family and started as sharecroppers. Sharecroppers were people employed by a farmer and harvested crops in return for a place to live.

This was a popular practice in the South, and unfortunately, it kept blacks indebted to plantation owners. Though the sharecroppers received pay at the end of the season, the farmer would make charges for what they "owed." This included anything he felt the need to tack on. In the end, they often ended up with no pay.

George and Ida Mae were fortunate to receive a small amount of money at the end of the year from their employer. But with the Great Depression in full swing, they soon found it hard to provide for their family. Which now also included two young kids.

But the tipping point came in 1937 when George's cousin was accused of stealing a white family's turkeys and he was brutally beaten by a mob of white men. Though he miraculously survived the incident, he wasn't the same afterward.

They didn't want to live in fear of something like this happening to them, so they decided to leave the racist South behind and see if they could find a better life in Illinois. Once they received their small year's settlement, they loaded up all they had and their young family and boarded a crowded Jim Crow train to flee northward.

Lesson 3: Chicago became Ida Mae's eventual home, but moving didn't change her life like she had hoped.

When Ida Mae made it to Chicago, she thought it looked like heaven. But soon they found things weren't quite so easy. George and Ida Mae travelled to Milwaukee to find a job. But unfortunately, because of the Depression, even the low paying factory jobs were scarce.

Eventually, George landed a job in Chicago helping an ice vendor. It didn't pay much but did give them a small one room basement apartment in the city. But because of the massive amounts of migrants, the city started to get overcrowded. **White neighborhoods sealed themselves off, meaning newcomers were forced to live in overpriced, tiny apartments.**

In addition, they also weren't warmly welcomed by the blacks who were born there. This was because they weren't happy about the new competition for the same low-paying jobs. But it was hardest to find a job as a black woman from the South. They were perceived as both less suited for hard work and uneducated.

But finally, Ida Mae found a job at a hospital. Soon they were able to move into a slightly better apartment. It didn't seem like much, but they knew it was better than what they would've had in the South.

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The Warmth Of Other Suns Review

I'm not the best with history books, so I didn't really enjoy *The Warmth Of Other Suns*. But that doesn't mean that it's a bad book! I did think that the stories of Ida Mae, George Starling, and Pershing Foster were interesting. And they teach a lot of important lessons about many aspects of life, too!

Who would I recommend The Warmth Of Other Suns summary to?

The 64-year-old who is curious about the untold parts of US history, the 32-year-old history buff that wants to hear about something they probably didn't learn in school, and anyone with an interest in the forces that affected America as it grew from 1915 to 1970.