“The Atlanta Compromise” Speech by Booker T. Washington

**Directions:** We will read, highlight, reflect, discuss, and analyze the famous speech by Booker T. Washington. You will be responding to the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and developing your answers using at least ***THREE (OR MORE***) sentences that include textual support and your own thoughtful commentary.

***This will be a graded assignment, so put forth a quality effort!!!***

***Paragraphs 1 & 2***

1. What details in the first paragraph establish the audience and setting of Washington’s speech? Explain the importance of the audience and setting.
2. What is the claim he is making in the second sentence? Why is that important?
3. Explain the significance of the meaning in the statement “we began at the top instead of at the bottom.” Was this a good strategy for the Negro race to begin their transition to freedom and integration in a post-slavery United States? Explain.

***Paragraphs 3 & 4***

1. How does the ***allegory*** of the lost ship in distress connect to the situation for Negroes in America at the time of the speech? Whom do the distressed people on the ship represent? Who is the friendly ship who keeps offering the help? Why do they need to be told three times to “Cast your bucket where you are”?
2. Identify an example of ***juxtaposition*** in the fourth paragraph. Explain its importance to his message.
3. Explain this quote: “it is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.” Do you agree or disagree with this view? Explain.

***Paragraph 5***

1. Washington now shifts his focus to the white race as he advises them on their role in working with African Americans to ensure success in the South. Why is this shift important to his message? Include a key quote and explain the deeper meaning as you see it.
2. How does his advice to the white race relate to the advice he gives to those of the black race? What is your reaction to his advice?
3. What is the impact of Washington’s description of the work African Americans did in the past? How do these descriptions support Washington’s ideas about the future?
4. Explain the importance of the ***imagery*** in Washington’s description of the “loyalty” African Americans “proved . . . in the past.” Select a quote that stands out to you and explain its meaning in your own words.

***Paragraphs 6 & 7***

1. There is an important ***Biblical allusion*** to the “Oppressor” and the “oppressed”; how does this connect to the relations between blacks and whites during this time? How does it further develop his point of view?
2. What is important about the ***repetition*** of “one-third” in paragraph 7?
3. Identify an example of ***juxtaposition*** in paragraph 7. Explain its significance to Washington’s message.
4. Find an example of ***parallel structure*** in paragraph 7 and explain its significance to the speech.

***Paragraphs 8 & 9***

1. Explain the meaning of the “path” he presents. Select key quotes and images that show the importance of the path and explain why you think they are important to his overall message.
2. Washington uses ***pathos (appeal to emotion)*** in this paragraph – what emotions are strong in this paragraph? Include textual evidence to support your analysis.
3. Explain the importance of the ***juxtaposition*** presented in the last sentence of paragraph 9.

***Paragraph 10***

1. Washington concludes his speech by pledging African Americans’ cooperation in Southern progress. What do his comments about the “opportunity offered by the Exposition” suggest about its role in the relationship between African Americans and white Americans?
2. What is the “higher good” he is referring to in the conclusion? How does this relate to the overall ideas presented in the speech?

***Overall Questions***

1. Summarize his main purpose in this speech. How would a white audience at the time react to his message? How would a black audience at the time react to his message?
2. What would have been your message to blacks and whites at this point in history? Be specific and detailed in your meaning.
3. How do you think Booker T. Washington would react to the status of African Americans in the 21st Century? What would he be pleased about? What would disappoint him?