

The Atlanta Compromise, Reacting to the Past, by Iris Finkel

Roles

The following are role sheets to hand out individually to students. Students should not share their roles with others.

Booker T. Washington

Faction: Supports Separate but Equal

You were born a slave in 1856 on a plantation in Franklin County, Virginia, and were raised with your brother and sister by your mother in the typical log cabin. Your mother was the plantation cook. You were called to the big house to do chores on occasion; once you served as fly swatter on a warm day when a meal was served outdoors. You were a curious boy and you yearned for an education once you were free. You eventually traveled to Hampton, Virginia, working day and night to support yourself and pay the fees to attend Hampton Institute. One of the directors of the school, General Chapman, saw your potential, mentored you, and then recommended that you be appointed as the head of the new Tuskegee Industrial and Normal Institute, which you became in 1881. You condemn slavery, but you see the benefit of learning the skills slaves used in their labor. You see this in terms of the economic value of these skills, as former White masters are dependent and must pay others to perform them.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Thomas Dixon Jr.

Faction: Supports Separate but Equal

You are a white Southerner born in 1964 in Shelby, North Carolina. You were educated at Wake Forest University and Johns Hopkins University, and considered a career in acting and then law. After failing at those, you followed in the footsteps of your father, becoming a Baptist minister. You will soon be moving to New York to preach in a church there. You have also begun to write historical novels incorporating your beliefs of the inferiority of the "Negro race," including *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905). You are an overt segregationist and believe that lynchings by the Ku Klux Klan are justified. You are not eager to meet with the radicals, but you think that Booker T. Washington is a Negro who acknowledges that limiting education to teaching fieldwork, home-building, and similar skills is the way forward, and you are eager to have your say.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Edgar Garner Murphy

Faction: Supports Separate but Equal

You were born in Arkansas in 1869, but moved to Texas as a young boy with your mother and sister after your father abandoned the family. You then moved to Tennessee at 16 to study at the University of the South in Sewanee. You are an Episcopal priest and advocate for improved child labor laws and public education. You served churches in Texas before you were ordained in 1893. You are now Rector of St. Paul's Church in Chillicothe, Ohio. You are a vocal supporter of white supremacy, but are horrified by the practice of lynching. You now believe that it is up to the southern white upper classes to stop allowing that barbaric act to continue. You have visited Tuskegee Industrial and Normal Institute, considering it as a site for meetings with other advocates of your causes.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Belle Kearney

Faction: Supports Separate but Equal

You were born in 1863 on your parents' plantation in Madison County, Mississippi. Your father was a wealthy plantation owner but suffered great financial losses after the Civil War. As a result, he was no longer able to afford the tuition at Canton Young Ladies' Academy. You educated yourself and opened a private school in a room on the plantation to earn income. Although you are deeply committed to public education and are an advocate for women's rights, you remain a firm believer in white supremacy. You are currently working on your autobiography, *A Slaveholder's Daughter*.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Isaiah Montgomery

Faction: Supports Separate but Equal

You were born into slavery in 1847 at Davis Bend, Mississippi on the plantation of Joseph Davis, the brother of Jefferson Davis, who was the president of the Southern Confederacy. Mr. Davis provided relatively good working conditions and encouraged literacy among his slaves. He relied on your father for cotton transactions as well as for his skills as a mechanic. After the war, your parents stayed on the plantation and prospered. They improved the land, diversified the crops and became major cotton producers in the region. Your father fostered a colony of freedmen on the property until he was unable to sustain it. After your father died, you furthered his dream of a segregated community for Negroes, founding Mound Bayou between the big employers for the folks in the community, the Memphis and Vicksburg railroad lines. Five years ago, you were the only elected Negro representative allowed into the Mississippi Constitutional Convention, formed to promote disenfranchisement of Negroes. You support this measure, believing in the good of a segregated Negro community, as evidenced at Mound Bayou.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

John Sharp Williams

Faction: Supports Separate but Equal

You were born in Memphis in 1854. Your mother died when you were young and your father, a colonel in the Confederate army, was killed in the Battle of Shiloh during the Civil War. Your mother's father took you and your brother to his plantation where his second wife raised you after he died. You received a law degree from the University of Virginia, and in 1893, you were elected to the United States House of Representatives. You proudly proclaim your views on the limitations of the Negro race.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

W.E.B. Du Bois

Faction: Opposes Separate but Equal

You were born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1868 and raised in a racially integrated community. While you have not had to endure the racial upheaval in the south, you have had a fair share of bigotry aimed at you, particularly as an undergraduate at Fisk University. You very recently earned a doctorate from Harvard, the first African American to do so. As an undergraduate you attended Fisk University before transferring to Harvard, and studying abroad at the University of Berlin. You wrote to Mr. Washington to see there might be a place for you to teach there and received a curt offer of a position to teach math. You are currently teaching at Wilberforce University, Ohio but still not the areas of your specialty, History and Sociology, and therefore you are pursuing other teaching opportunities. You continue to write and are currently working on a monograph on the suppression of the slave trade. You are active in civil rights causes.

[Your resume](#)

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Ida B. Wells

Faction: Opposes Separate but Equal

You were born in Holly Springs, Mississippi in 1862, right before President Lincoln emancipated Confederate-held territory. Your parents, active in the Republican Party during Reconstruction, died from a yellow fever epidemic when you were a teen. To keep your remaining family together, you took a job as a teacher and later moved to Memphis to live with your aunt. You began your college education at Fisk University. You became appalled by the disenfranchisement of Negroes and felt compelled to speak out against it. The first incident that set you on the path of fighting for equal rights was in 1884, when you were ordered to a Jim Crow car where there were no first class accommodations, despite your having purchased a first class ticket. You hired an African American lawyer to sue the railroad company on your behalf, won the case in lower court only to have it appealed by the railroad company in Tennessee Supreme Court. The higher court concluded that you were not acting in good faith to find a suitable seat for the ride, reversing the lower court's ruling. As co-owner and editor of *The Free Speech and Headlight*, a local Negro newspaper in Memphis, you wrote your own editorials condemning violence against Negroes, disenfranchisement, and failure of Negroes to fight for equal rights. In 1892, your friend Tom Moss was lynched after defending his store against an attack by whites. Outraged, you promoted an anti-lynching campaign. Your pamphlet, [*The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States*](#), was recently published.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Anna J. Cooper

Faction: Opposes Separate but Equal

You were born into slavery in 1858 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Your mother worked as a domestic servant for a wealthy lawyer who you suspect was your father. When you were ten years old, you attended St. Augustine's Normal School and Collegiate Institute. You thrived there, immersing yourself in classical studies and helping to teach younger students. You married at the age of eighteen and were widowed two years later. Your status as a widow enabled you to continue teaching. You soon applied for admission to Oberlin College in 1881, writing directly to the President of Oberlin requesting admission, free tuition and a place to stay in exchange for a commitment to teach summers. You were accepted and followed a rigorous course of study, eventually earning a Bachelor of Arts in 1884 and then a Master of Arts in college teaching in 1887, both degrees from Oberlin. You do not object to the industrial education that Booker T. Washington encourages, and praised his work in your book, *[A Voice From the South](#)*. You do object to industrial education as the dominant form of education for African American youths.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

John Wesley Gilbert

Faction: Opposes Separate but Equal

You were born in Hephzibah, Georgia in 1864. As a child you spent half of the year on a farm and the other half in public schools in Augusta. You were interested in the classics, and you learned languages easily. In 1884, you began your studies in the newly opened Paine Institute, later transferring to Brown University. Atypical for an African American, you pursued the classics as a scholar supported by a scholarship for you to live and study at the American School in Athens. While there, you relished the work you did at excavation sites throughout Greece and the Mediterranean Islands. You earned both an A.B. and A.M. degrees from Brown University. You returned to Augusta to teach the Greek Language and English at Paine Institute. You are actively committed to encouraging Negroes to pursue academic subjects, and to revel in the classics as you do. You believe in promoting goodwill among the races, but see that happening in ways that are different from those that Mr. Washington preaches.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

William Frank Fonvieuille

Faction: Opposes Separate but Equal

You were born in Salisbury, North Carolina in 1870. You graduated from Livingstone College, a fine private college for African Americans. You have recently started writing. Your article, published in the A.M.E. Zion Quarterly, about your summer riding the trains through the Jim Crow south has been read more widely than you imagined. The experience has opened your eyes to the harsh conditions imposed on African Americans forced to ride in railroad cars that are inferior to the cars for white folks. You strongly believe this is wrong but do not feel committed to applying yourself to civil rights activities. You respect Mr. Washington and are honored to be invited to meet with him and a select group before he is to deliver his big speech in at the Cotton States and International Exposition. From what you know of those attending, you guess that you will have most in common with the Tuskegee students. You guess that they might not be comfortable expressing their honest opinions either, but you acknowledge that anyone who read your article knows yours.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Fanny Frances Garrison Villard

Faction: Opposes Separate But Equal

You were born in 1844 in Boston, Massachusetts. Your father was William Lloyd Garrison the white abolitionist leader and editor/publisher of the *Liberator*. You attended a normal school before marrying Henry Villard, a German national who became wealthy as the publisher of the *New York Evening Post* and the *Nation*. He also served as president of Northern Pacific Railroad. You have been too busy raising your four children to pursue the civil rights and suffragist causes you support. It is an honor to be invited to the meeting with Booker T. Washington and others and are grateful for the encouragement from your husband.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

George Blackburn

Faction: Indeterminate

You are a third year student at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. You were raised in Montgomery, Alabama. Your parents were born into slavery. Your grandmother on your mother's side was a seamstress and made connections with sellers of fabrics and notions when she was sewing clothes for her masters. As a free woman, she tried to open a dress shop selling her own designs but she could not sell enough dresses to keep that business going. She followed that by establishing herself as a reseller of the the fabrics and notions she used to buy. You have her entrepreneurial drive and want to learn more about the inner workings of business and finances. You find that Tuskegee is lacking in the business courses that will help you succeed as a business owner. You would like to continue your studies elsewhere but there are not many options for African Americans. This has got you thinking about taking a stronger stand regarding civil rights, but you have great respect for Mr. Washington and want to believe in his approach to improving race relations. You are excited for the opportunity to join him and others in the upcoming meeting before he is to deliver what is sure to be a landmark speech at The Exposition in Atlanta.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Eva Jones

Faction: Indeterminate

You are just starting your studies at Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. You were born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama and have had the good fortune to travel to New York occasionally to visit your uncle's family. You have heard the stories about how your great uncle made his way to New York by escaping through the "freedom train" and about the people he met along the way. You love to read and would like to foster that in others. Your goal is to be a teacher, but you aim to teach at the college level. You are aware of the northern African American professor, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, and are looking forward to meeting him in a few days at the meeting you were invited to attend before Mr. Washington gives a speech at the The Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy:

Robert Mabry

Faction: Indeterminate

You were born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, but you moved to Birmingham, Alabama as an infant to live with your grandmother, who raised you after your mother died in childbirth. Your father stayed in Chattanooga and became a preacher at a small church there. You spent much of your childhood helping out at your grandmother's store. Customers noticed the shelves that you built and hired you to do carpentry at their homes. You earned enough money to pay your way to Tuskegee. While you were a student there, Booker T. Washington hired you to do repairs on the fences outside the gardens and followed your progress as a student for your remaining two years. Mr. Washington hired you to teach carpentry as soon as you graduated.

Motivations:

Objectives:

Strategy: