

Name:

Date:

# READING COMPREHENSION

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions.

## Paul Robeson: A Voice for Justice and Change

Paul Robeson was a remarkable figure in American history. Born in 1898 in Princeton, New Jersey, he achieved great things as an athlete, actor, singer, and activist. Robeson's father was an escaped enslaved man who later became a pastor, and his mother was a teacher. His parents instilled in him the value of education and resilience, which shaped his life and career.

Robeson excelled in academics and sports at Rutgers University, where he became the third African American to attend the prestigious school. Despite facing racial discrimination, he was an All-American football player and earned top academic honors. After Rutgers, he attended Columbia Law School. However, he found it challenging to work as a lawyer because of racial prejudice, so he turned to the arts, where he found a new path to make an impact.

As a singer and actor, Robeson became known worldwide. He performed in notable roles in plays like *Othello* and sang in concerts, where his deep, powerful voice captivated audiences. His rendition of the song "Ol' Man River" from the musical *Show Boat* became especially famous and is still celebrated today.

Beyond his artistic career, Robeson was passionate about social justice. He used his fame to speak out against racism, colonialism, and inequality. During the 1930s and 1940s, he was an outspoken advocate for workers' rights, civil rights, and the independence of colonized countries. Robeson's activism made him a target during the McCarthy era, a period when the U.S. government pursued individuals they suspected of being communists. Although he faced intense criticism and was blacklisted from many performances, Robeson continued to speak out for justice until his death in 1976.

Paul Robeson's legacy lives on as a symbol of courage and commitment to equality. His life reminds us of the power of art and voice in fighting for justice.

1. What challenges did Paul Robeson face at Rutgers University? How did he overcome them?

2. Why did Paul Robeson stop practicing law, and what career did he pursue instead?

3. What was the significance of the song "Ol' Man River" in Robeson's career?