

Reading Lesson

B1 Business: Madam Entrepreneur

Reading

Look at the title of the text and the picture. What do you think the text is about? Read the text.

Madam Entrepreneur

Sarah Breedlove—entrepreneur and inventor—was one of the first successful African-American businesswomen. Born in 1867 in Louisiana, she was the daughter of Owen and Minerva Breedlove. Both of her parents were slaves. Sarah was the only one of their seven children to be born after her parents were free people, but both parents died by the time Sarah was seven years old.

Sarah moved to Mississippi to live with her married sister, but she didn't like her sister's husband, so she left her home when she was 14, and married a man named Moses McWilliams. Her daughter A'Lelia was born in 1885. When Sarah's husband died two years later, she needed to find a way to make money. In 1889, she moved to Missouri, where three of her brothers lived. Around this time, Sarah began to lose her hair, so she began using a hair product by Annie Turnbo Malone called "The Great Wonderful Hair Grower" and joined Malone's team of black saleswomen. A year later, in Denver, Colorado, Sarah met and married a man named



Charles Joseph Walker. She changed her name to Madam C. J. Walker and created her own hair products for African-American women. The Madam C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company started to trade in 1906.

The business grew quickly, and by 1913, when only 10% of drivers were women, she already owned three cars. By 1917, the company had trained over 20,000 women to sell their hair products. At the time, the majority of black women could only work as servants, cleaners, or farmers. As saleswomen for Madam C. J. Walker, they could make enough money to buy their own homes, pay for their children's education, and also give money to help charities.

Helping the poor was an important part of the company's philosophy. In 1910, Madam Walker gave \$1,000 to help build a black YMCA in Indianapolis. She also paid for scholarships at a number of schools and colleges, and during World War I, she and her daughter made money to buy an ambulance for black soldiers. In 1919, she gifted \$5,000 (about \$73,000 in today's money) to the NAACP, an organization that helps black people.

slaves (n plural): people (usually black people, historically, in the US, African Americans) who had to work for others for very little, or no money

philosophy (n): a set of ideas that a person or group has

Reading Lesson

Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

education organization scholarship trade trained

1. Marcia works for a/an _____ that helps children with disabilities.
2. Keri _____ for 10 months before she ran the New York marathon.
3. A university _____ isn't necessary if you want to become a restaurant chef.
4. Our company started to _____ in sports clothes five years ago.
5. The college offers a/an _____ for engineering students from Central America.

Comprehension

Choose the correct option.

1. When Sarah Breedlove was born, her parents ...
a didn't live together. **b** were slaves. **c** had six other children.
2. Sarah's first job was for ...
a her brothers. **b** Annie Turnbo Malone. **c** her husband.
3. Sarah changed her name to Madam C. J. Walker when she ...
a started her business. **b** got married. **c** moved to Missouri.
4. During her life, Madam Walker did NOT live in ...
a Indianapolis. **b** Missouri. **c** Colorado.
5. In 1919, Madam Walker gave ... to the NAACP.
a \$1,000 **b** \$5,000 **c** \$73,000

Thinking

How many successful businesswomen from your country can you name? What talents do they have that make them so successful?