Mary McLeod Bethune

Notes & Study Guide – Test on December 14th

**Childhood**
Slavery had ended by the time Mary McLeod Bethune was born but her parents had been enslaved. Slaves were not allowed to learn to read. Mary decided she would try to learn to read at Miss Wilson’s school. She was one of the few people in her community that knew how to read. Mary went on to a high school called Scotia, a school just for African American teenage girls.

**Learning to Teach**
Mary learned how to argue for her ideas on the debate team. Mary became a missionary to teach people about her religion. Since Mary was not allowed to go to Africa as a missionary, she became a teacher in Augusta, GA.

**Starting a School**
Mary decided to start a school in Daytona, Florida because many African Americans were moving there, and there were not enough schools for African American Children. She started her school with $1.50. She had diligence and was willing to work very hard. The school opened with 5 students and then grew to 250 students in two years. When Bethune needed a new school, she found a piece of land for $250.00. She worked diligently to raise the $5 for the first payment. She sold pies, and she rode her bicycle for miles asking for help from churches and clubs. By 1912, the school had its own barn and farm animals. They raised food for themselves and for money.

**Washington, D.C.**
Mary Bethune started clubs for African American Women. Volunteers raised money for summer camps, taught health care and cooking classes. Bethune argues against segregation because African American and white women could not sit together at club meetings. Bethune respected the authority of President Calvin Coolidge and agreed to meet with him in Washington D.C., so they could talk about ways to help children. In a depression people lose jobs and businesses fail. Bethune helped Eleanor Roosevelt with the NYA or the National Youth Administration to help teenagers and young adults get jobs. Eleanor knew Bethune cared about justice. When the U.S. went to war in 1941, African Americans who had worked in the NYA were trained to get high paying factory jobs, and they made equipment to fight in the war.

**Her Work Continues**
President Harriet Truman gave Bethune an award for her work. She was also awarded in other countries. Her dream of going to Africa finally came true in 1952 and she was honored with the Star of Africa Award. In 2004, Bethune Cookman College had its 100th Anniversary. The National Council of Negro Women is still at work helping African American women and children in their communities. Bethune became the first woman and the first African American to be honored with a statue in a public park in Washington, D.C. She was also honored with a stamp. She will always be remembered for helping youths through education.