

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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### Student Reading 3.4: People Making Cincinnati Better

Many people have contributed to our community of Cincinnati. This reading discusses four individuals that helped to make our community a better place for the **common good** of its **citizens**.

#### Peter Clark (1829 – 1925)

Peter Clark was very influential in the educational **community**. He helped lead the fight for black people to have the right to receive an education.

His father was a freed slave who opened his own barber shop business. Peter did not want to follow in his father's footsteps, but when his father passed away, Peter stepped up and continued his father's business. However, he did make one change. His father would only cut the hair of white men; Peter invited black men to have their hair cut in his shop as well. After that, white men refused to get their hair cut there and Peter closed the barber shop.

Peter next went to work for his uncle in his grocery store. His uncle, John Gaines, was very inspiration and influenced both Peter and his career. Thanks to



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his uncle's guidance, Peter decided to pursue a teaching career. He wanted to **advocate** for black students to receive an education. In 1852, his dream came true, and he started teaching.

At the time, there was a shortage of teachers. He was so passionate about teaching, that he would teach classes after his full time teaching job during the day, to help ensure all black students received an education. It has been suggested that between the Civil War and 1890, there was not a single African American teacher in Cincinnati that had not been trained by Peter Clark.

Peter also saw the need to establish a separate high school for African American students. To help spread his message, he co-published a newspaper entitled Cincinnati Afro-American in which he wrote about the serious need for an African American High School. With Peter's **persistence**, the city of Cincinnati founded Gaines High School (named after Peter's uncle). Peter became the principal of the high school, making him the first African American high school principal.



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Peter affected the educational world and our **community** in many special ways. Because of this, he was named the nation’s primary black public school educator.

### **Doris Day (1924 – present)**

Doris Day was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1924. Throughout her life she became a famous actor and singer. She recorded 39 films and more than 650 music recordings. She won many awards for all of her hard work, including a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

In 1971 Doris Day cofounded the organization “Actors and Others for Animals.” She became a very strong and influential person in the animal activist **community**. A few years later, she created her own **non-profit** organization that was named Doris Day Animal League (DDAL). Doris Day and this new group established the annual Spay Day USA in 1994 that still occurs every year. Doris Day is also very active in raising money for the Humane Society of the United States.



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In 1974 President George W. Bush presented Doris Day with the Presidential Medal of Freedom because of all her service to her local **community** and country.

### **Ruth Lyons (1805 – 1988)**

Ruth Lyons started her career in radio and television with local channels like WCPO and WLWT at the age of twenty. She was known for her energy, strong opinions, and her support of Cincinnati's sports teams. She also made women feel as though they were a part of society.

The program she hosted was called the 50/50 Club. She had very famous actors and singers come on and she would interview them and perform with them. The show became the highest rated local day time talk show.

Several years into her radio program, there was a horrible tragedy that occurred in Cincinnati, Ohio called the Great Flood of 1937. Many people lost their homes and their lives during this flood. Ruth stayed on the air with several of



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her coworkers around the clock to help keep people informed, calm their nerves, and help raise money for the victims.

One group of people that truly loved Ruth's show was the women of this era. Many women of this time were stay at home moms and did not have careers outside the home. Ruth's voice, ideas, and enthusiasm made these women feel like they were a part of society again.

In 1939, (after losing her daughter to cancer), Ruth decided she wanted to give back to the hospital community and help brighten the spirits of the patients that were hospitalized. Her solution was to create the Ruth Lyon's Christmas Fund. This organization was founded to provide toys for every hospitalized child in Cincinnati and also provide hospital equipment to the local hospitals. This organization continues today in Ruth Lyon's honor. It has been able to raise millions of dollars thanks to Lyon's help in starting the cause.

### **Irvin Westheimer (1879 – 1980)**

Irvin Westheimer went to work in 1903 just like it was any other day. He parked in the parking lot and went towards the back door of his work. However,



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before he walked in, he looked over and saw a young boy and his dog looking through the garbage cans for any scrap of food they could find. Irvin did not want to scare the boy, so he slowly walked over and began a conversation with him. He learned through this conversation that the boy did not have a father and was extremely hungry. Westheimer knew instantly that this child needed a male **role model** and volunteered for the job. He took the young boy under his wing and **mentored** him throughout his life.

Irvin loved this experience. He started to encourage his friends, co-workers, and family members to do the same with other young boys who needed mentoring. This led to him starting The Big Brothers of America Program. This idea spread all over encouraging Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, 5 years later, to start the Big Sisters Program in New York City. In 1997 these two agencies came together and became known as The Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America. Today, there are 360 agencies nationwide that serve more than 150,000 children each year.



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For all of Irvin Westheimer's contributions to society, he was awarded the Ohio Governor's Award in 1977 for helping people less fortunate than himself.

