

# Black Spring Coffee

By ReadWorks



In the North Oakland neighborhood known locally as Koreatown North, a string of commercial property, scrappy residential communities, and new small businesses have been popping up in force in 2013.

One such enterprise—Black Spring Coffee—exemplifies the arts-friendly attitude of the neighborhood, which is home to many of Oakland’s art galleries, performance spaces, independently owned eateries, and other under-the-radar grassroots establishments. The space out of which Black Spring Coffee operates is a repurposed storefront that once belonged to a florist.

A vintage sign that used to glow neon, reading “FLOWERS” and visible from 10 blocks away, still gives the building a distinctive character. Although there are no longer bouquets and corsages for sale under the watch of the old sign, it still radiates a cozy mom-and-pop atmosphere that makes the block feel welcoming. Once a preservation permit as a historic landmark from the city of Oakland has been granted, the sign’s maintenance will be subsidized in part by city dollars set aside for this purpose. Ryan Stark, the entrepreneur behind Black Spring, plans to invest in new neon for the sign, re-illuminating it for the first time in over 15 years.

As of 2013, in this neighborhood, a rise in gentrification coexists with the area's history of poverty, homelessness, and street crime. As is not uncommon in affordable, residential, semi-urban areas by large cities, an influx of creative professionals has begun to change the character of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood, bordered by West Oakland, downtown Oakland Hills, and Berkeley, along with the communities of Emeryville and Piedmont, is known historically as the birthplace of the Black Panthers. It was also the childhood home of civil rights activists and writers Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. The neighborhood has long been a site for political activism and creative ferment.

Stark says, "It's an up-and-coming neighborhood. And it's right beneath our apartment. The landlords are great. I can just see a lot of things happening in this neck of the woods. A lot of potential; I'm glad to be here, kind of at the beginning of that."

Stark, an artist and printmaker, plans to use Black Spring to showcase the work of local artists. "I have all these great walls to use for art. Every first Friday, I'm going to do a different artist. I have a neat setup where for every first Friday I'd like to put out a limited-run book of every artist who shows here. There'll be a show and there'll be books for cheap."

Stark's background in the arts has informed his decision to create a venue where new work can be seen by the public. Says Stark, "I've been an artist for years in all sorts of galleries, showing things; but this is the first business I've started."

North Oaklanders can sip lattes and cappuccinos made by a brand new, state-of-the-art espresso machine. Pastries, bagels, and a full breakfast and lunch menu are also available for hungry patrons. The coffee beans are locally sourced and roasted at the café, and at the beginning of 2014, only few months after the opening in August 2013, some locals have already made the café their habitual spot.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where is Black Spring Coffee located?

- A Berkeley, CA
- B North Oakland, CA
- C San Francisco, CA
- D Piedmont, CA

2. How is the neighborhood of Koreatown North described in the passage?

- A gentrified, suburban
- B urban, commercial
- C historic, well-preserved
- D up-and-coming, arts-friendly

3. North Oakland has a history of political activism. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A North Oakland is the birthplace of the Black Panthers.
- B North Oakland has a history of poverty and homelessness.
- C North Oakland is home to many art galleries and performance spaces.
- D North Oakland is seeing an influx of creative professionals.

4. Black Spring Coffee reflects what change in North Oakland?

- A increase in poverty
- B decrease in homelessness
- C gentrification
- D increase in street crime

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A the political and creative history of North Oakland
- B a new coffee shop in a developing community
- C how to start your own local business in a small town
- D Stark's artistic background and its influence on Black Spring

6. Read the following sentences: "As of 2013, in this neighborhood, a rise in **gentrification** coexists with the area's history of poverty, homelessness, and street crime. As is not uncommon in affordable, residential, semi-urban areas by large cities, an influx of creative professionals has begun to change the character of the neighborhood."

As used in the passage, what does "**gentrification**" most nearly mean?

- A the process of making a neighborhood more prosperous
- B the process of making a neighborhood more affordable
- C the process of cleaning graffiti and vandalism in a neighborhood
- D the process of building new neighborhoods near cities

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

North Oakland is an affordable, residential, semi-urban area by a large city. \_\_\_\_\_, there has been an influx of creative professionals that have begun to change the character of the neighborhood.

- A Instead
- B However
- C Particularly
- D As a result

8. What does Stark plan to do every first Friday at Black Spring?

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9. Why was there an influx of creative professionals to North Oakland and Koreatown North?

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10. Explain how and why the neighborhood of Koreatown North has begun to change.

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## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 1380

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8. What does Stark plan to do every first Friday at Black Spring?

**Suggested answer:** Every first Friday, Stark plans to showcase the work of a different artist and put out a limited-run book of their art.

9. Why was there an influx of creative professionals to North Oakland and Koreatown North?

**Suggested answer:** There was an influx of creative professionals to North Oakland and Koreatown North because it is an affordable, residential, semi-urban area near a large city.

10. Explain how and why the neighborhood of Koreatown North has begun to change.

**Suggested answer:** The neighborhood of Koreatown North has become more gentrified, with new businesses, residential communities, and commercial properties. This change is due to the influx of creative professionals to the neighborhood.